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JAN SMUTS

Photo by Levson, Johannesburg.

GENERAL SMUTS, 1915.

JAN SMUTS

BEING A CHARACTER SKETCH OF GEN. THE HON. J. C. SMUTS, K.C., M.L.A., MINISTER OF DEFENCE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

BY

N. LEVI

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WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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THE author is much indebted to his fellow-townsman, Mr. H. Kemball-Cook, M.A., who has been good enough to go through the MS. of the following pages. Mr. Kemball-Cook's wide knowledge, experience, and literary taste have been the means of weeding out some of the ranker growths among the author's tares of style.

The whole of this book was written during General Smuts' absence in East Africa. For its political complexion, the facts selected, and treatment of the subject generally, the author is solely responsible.

PRETORIA, *September* 1916.

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JAN SMUTS

I

RIEBEEK TO STELLENBOSCH

BETWEEN the seas that wash the Cape and the sun-baked stretches of the vast Karroo there lies a belt of fertile country, known as the Western Province. In summer it is buffeted by the boisterous trades. In winter the north-west wind caps the coastal ranges with generous clouds, and in the intervals of glorious sunshine rain drenches hill and dale. This is the land of the vine, the land of the golden grain. It is the land of which an ex-member of the Union Assembly spoke when he said that "the first twelve inches of the soil between the Hex River and the sea were worth more than all the deep levels of the Rand put together." Its beauty, now smiling, now rugged, haunts the memory of him whose lines are cast in less pleasant places. Its oaks are mighty, its pines statuesque.

When, in bygone centuries, the staid burghers of the city of the Peninsula were taking the air on the Heerengracht or in the street called Broad, the men of the Western Province began their systematic inroads on the unknown wilds of the African continent. Whilst forts and garrisons watched over the people of Table Bay, Dutch farmers carved out homes for themselves in hoek and kloof. Theirs the battle against the natives and the beasts of the field, what time Cape Town garrulously absorbed the latest news brought by vessels from East and West. Cape Town was satisfied to

submit to a paternal Government and an imported civilization. The men on the farms had to build up a culture of their own.

And so, from a mixture of French blood, and Dutch, and more than a little German, with a few other ingredients from the Teutonic stock of Europe thrown in, a new type developed. Separated though it was by no more than a short distance from the metropolis, its distinctive features were not to be denied. Prim and Puritanical is the "Bôlander," thoughtful, shrewdly intelligent in a quiet way, frugal, thrifty, attached to his own atmosphere, to his own church, and to the somewhat sombre vestment he wears in that church. Turning his grapes into brandy for other people to drink; cautious and conservative in many things, but fond of real progress; too Dutch for the Englishman of the seaport; too "English" for the back-country Boer; sea-lawyer and amateur theologian almost to a man; perseveringly patient and often rather petty; towards middle age inclined to spectacles and portliness; mildly enterprising and sound at heart, he is of the stuff that goes to build lasting structures. His son, if his means permit, is to be a doctor, a barrister, a clergyman, a surveyor.

Whether you see the "Bôlander" in Adderley Street or in the Bechuanaland bush; whether you come across him entering the Carlton at Johannesburg or teaching at a farm-school in Free State sheep country, you never mistake him after a first acquaintance. Even if his peculiar *cachet* did not betray him to the eye, you would swear to his identity the moment you heard him speak, for it is his accent that is the most striking thing about him. It is quite a study to learn to distinguish the Malmesbury *r* from its Paarl counterpart, the Paarl "b-r-r-r-ei" from the Stellenbosch variety. But there is a family likeness about them all, and nothing on earth that I ever listened to quite resembles the accent. It is by no means unpleasant; it is certainly strong.

Jacobus Abraham Smuts, at one time a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Cape of Good Hope for the

Photo by J. Gribble, Paarl.

MR. AND MRS. SMUTS, SENIOR.

constituency of Malmesbury, was a representative man of his class. To him and to his wife, née Catharina Petronella de Vries, was born on the 24th of May 1870 a manchild not then materially differing from other infants, as far as one could see. The venue was Bovenplaats, a "Zwartland" farm not far from the village of Riebeek West, turning its back on the Malmesbury mountains that lie between it and the sandy regions towards the Atlantic. I shall not go into the annals of the Smuts family, because this is no biography. General Smuts is still a comparatively young man, and very much alive. The time for writing his life has not yet arrived; even if it had, I should not be writing it. To do so would mean the compilation of the political history of South Africa for the last twenty years: no enviable task, to be sure.

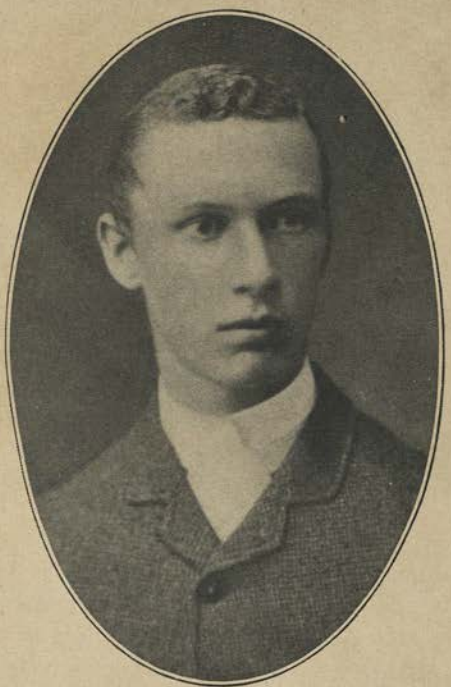
The child was christened Jan Christiaan (or Christian—both names have been used in official documents); not Johannes but plain Jan, which is something to be thankful for in a country of long-drawn-out names. Let it be stated here and now that the diminutive of Jan is Jannie, not Janie as it is often erroneously written. Janie gives a different pronunciation. We all call General Smuts "Jannie," except to his face, when politeness demands "Oom Jannie," or the more formal "Generaal." Jan Smuts was not the eldest child of the family, though he is at present the oldest surviving member. He has two sisters and two brothers. One of the latter resembles him so much facially that they are often mistaken for each other. Of the five, Jan Christiaan is the only one who has become prominent in the public life of South Africa. It would surely have been a defiance of the law of averages if this had been otherwise.

Mr. Smuts senior removed to the farm Klipfontein when Jannie was eight years old. Klipfontein was a grain farm, fifteen miles from Riebeek West, where in his old age Mr. Smuts senior settled permanently. At a time when many boys have absorbed large quantities of book-learning, little Jan was still a child of nature. His career began when, as a toddler, he was carried by his grandfather across the fields in the dark to do duty as "touwleier"—

holding the rope ahead of a team of draught animals. In those days Western Province grain farmers started work at 4 a.m. in winter, and even earlier in summer; I do not know that their custom is very different, even now. But in the towns of South Africa we speak of the "lazy, retrogressive" Dutch farmer, when we begin the day with breakfast at half-past eight!

Having finished his apprenticeship as a touwleier, Jannie was promoted: he became a "goose-girl." I like to picture him to myself trying conclusions with a particularly truculent gander in a stubbly patch, with one eye possibly on a book, for he received a little farm-school instruction even in those days. Be that as it may, the goose age was followed by a period among the pigs. It was the natural order of progression. Goats succeeded pigs, to make way in their turn for sheep. This was a considerable advance, and no doubt a welcome change for a meditative boy. A couple of years' acquaintance with sheep qualified him for the stewardship of a small herd of cows and oxen. The top of the ladder was now within reach; Jannie could fairly consider himself a cattle farmer in embryo when, to crown all, he was actually entrusted with the care of the horses! This crown of happiness, however, was of short duration. Who knows what the world of kine and shows lost when, in the year of fate 1882, Jan Smuts was sent to Riebeek village; here, a modest scholastic establishment called "De Ark" catered for the educational needs of the country-side, and a Mr. T. C. Stoffberg taught young Smuts. The world wags strangely, for in 1915 the same Mr. Stoffberg—who had since become an Inspector of Schools in the Transvaal—resigned his official position to contest a parliamentary seat at Rustenburg against General Smuts' party—without success.

On the veld, Jannie had learnt many useful things. Among them was the art of cooking his own food. This art may have become vulgarized in Europe since the beginning of the Great War, but it will be admitted that the average statesman is not an adept at the preparation of victuals.



GENERAL SMUTS IN 1888.

General Smuts mastered it more fully during the struggle of 1899–1902, as we shall see.

Young Smuts' health was delicate during the first four years of his existence, but I believe he has not had a serious illness since. Although a distressing complaint had attacked several members of the Smuts family, his constitution, after years of the most exacting work, was found to be sound when the doctors examined him on the eve of his departure for East Africa in February 1916. In the days of his youth he looked pale and weedy; yet he was equal to the demands of an exceptionally rapid course of study. At the age of fifteen he passed this "elementary" examination (since abolished), and shortly after the "school higher." In 1886 the Victoria College at Stellenbosch, Alma Mater of many distinguished sons of the Western Province, received him among its students. He matriculated, third on the list, in 1888. The following year saw him a good second in the "intermediate" examination.

Something of the brilliancy of his college career can be gleaned from the *Cape Times* of the 23rd of September 1891, which states *inter alia* that "Mr. Jan Smuts, B.A., Ebden Scholar of the Cape University, leaves to-day per *Roslin Castle* for Europe. . . . Mr. Smuts holds the unique distinction of having sat for the B.A. examination both in Literature and Science, and of having been recommended by the examiners in both departments as worthy of a scholarship."

It may not be out of place to draw attention to the words "*Ebden* scholarship." It has been alleged by General Smuts' traducers, who are not always particular as to "facts," that he was from youth onwards a "creature of Rhodes'." There are some, again, who will tell you that the late Mr. Rhodes himself supplied him with the funds he required for his studies. Others, less malicious, speak of Rhodes' scholarships. It is difficult to understand how Smuts' acceptance of a competitive scholarship could have vitiated the eloquent argument afforded by his own actions. But, in any case, whichever version is preferred, the pretty

story has no foundation in fact. All the documents prove that the scholarship, on the strength of which he went to Europe, took its name from Mr. Ebden, a man well known in the Eastern Province. In addition to this, he had won several minor bursaries. His college education was consequently a matter of small expense to Mr. Smuts senior, who does not appear to have recognized his son's gifts, in the days of De Ark, or to have been at all anxious to let the lad set forth on an intellectual career.

II.

STELLENBOSCH TO CAMBRIDGE

WITH all due deference to the examination system prevailing in South Africa a quarter of a century ago, it may be said that a man possessing an exceptional memory might cram for a double B.A., and yet be without the higher mental equipment that would make him a power in the world. This would not be likely in the case of a student whose schooling practically began when he was twelve years of age; but as such things have been known to occur, it will be well to show that, in this particular instance, temperament, insight, and mental power were not lacking. A few magazine articles, written by young Smuts, will supply the proof. No attempt will be made, at this stage, to give a general analysis of his character. It should be mentioned, however, that the thumbnail sketch of the average Western Province man is not meant to apply, without further consideration, to the subject of this book. As a basis, it may serve more or less, but the following factors, in addition to parentage and early surroundings, contributed to the fashioning of the statesman of to-day: his Cambridge University course and European travel; his long stay in the Transvaal; his command in the Boer War, and, last but by no means least, the personal equation.

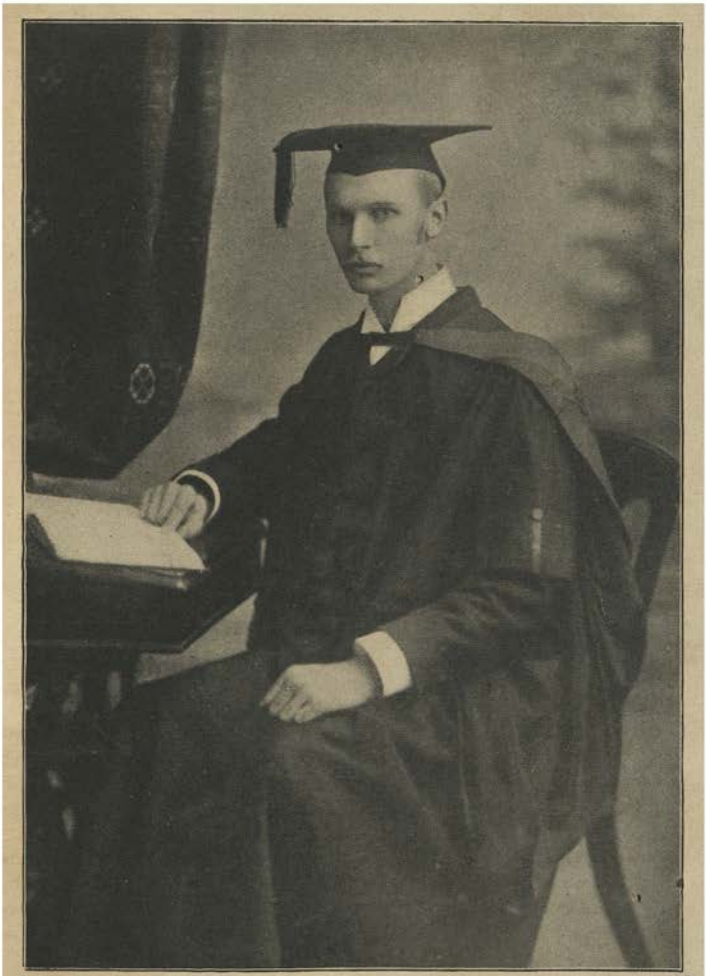
Het Zuid-Afrikaansch Tydschrift (*The South African Magazine*) of June 1889 contains an article that stamps him at once as a powerful personality as well as a strong individualist. It is entitled "Homo Sum," and deals largely with the system of slavery.[1]

[1] Some of the more striking portions are translated here: "The system of slavery involves a question of ethics (*is een zedelyk ists*).

Although some of General Smuts' latter-day critics might join issue here, it is characteristic of him that he concludes one passage by using both Dutch words for enthusiasm—*geestdrift* and *enthousiasme*—in order to lay stress on the phrase. All those, he continues, who have contributed to the advancement of mankind, were enthusiasts. Reverting to his original theme, he propounds the doctrine—not in universal favour in South Africa, by the way—that neither divine nor human principles can tolerate slavery. "The darkness of the Middle Ages was identically the same thing as slavery. Slaves to the will of the Pontiff, men were equally enslaved by the dictum of Aristotle."

These sentences are highly important as indicating his innermost convictions, especially in view of the fact that political opponents as well as some others are concerned to maintain that General Smuts is not only an enemy to freedom, but a rank Intellectualist of the most pronounced type. One recognizes that Mr. Nineteen Year Old, with generous enthusiasms and theoretical opinions, might indulge in sweeping generalizations that had not yet stood the test of

It is based on ethical grounds. Its influence and consequences are felt in the realm of ethics. If a clear notion as to this fact had prevailed, the system could never have existed. Its defence has rested on material grounds, on considerations of convenience and profit. . . . What can mere *words* avail as against *deeds*? As against its influence in practice?" The writer draws attention to the law of inertia; he refuses to accept as a factor in a discussion of this nature the "selfish principle of him who refers everything to the great 'I am,' who takes his own interest or convenience as his sole criterion." Calling this "the greatest curse to which flesh and blood can be liable," he appeals to the "reasonable element in human nature" as proof of the fact that slavery must always have been recognized as founded on the desire for personal gain. As an "incontrovertible argument" in favour of this assumption, he mentions the circumstance that "theocracy never knew the slave system proper." The Jews gave every slave an opportunity of regaining his freedom at the end of seven years. This is quoted as constituting a vital difference between their system and that of those nations whose slaves "had to bid good-bye to all hope of freedom, and were thus bound to descend to the lowest depths of degradation and despair, sinking further and further in the scale of humanity. Moral elevation, the highest form of religion, is based on enthusiasm."



GENERAL SMUTS IN 1891.

his experience. Such a one would say unreservedly things that General Smuts, or even Advocate Smuts, might wish to circumscribe ; but who can deny that fundamental traits are bound to show themselves when a young man sends a serious contribution to a very solid magazine ?

He proceeds : "The Law of Influence (*invloedswet*) is one of the grandest and most universal of moral laws. From it we derive our idea of God." His position is illustrated by the statement that God is represented in the Bible as being influenced by man to a greater extent than man's own fellow-being, for, whereas man is often deaf to man's entreaty, God yields to prayer. Men who are mentally and morally superior are more easily affected by us than persons of low character—"The nearer to perfection, the greater the domination of Influence." Pessimism he calls the negation of Perfection, the latter being the goal to reach which all things are striving. We applaud the abolition of physical slavery, but what about spiritual bondage ? he asks. The difference is one of degree, not one of kind. Spiritual slavery is infinitely more terrible than mere physical serfdom, spirit being so much more exalted than flesh.[1]

There is no record of the impression made by this article on the average Stellenbosch student of Mr. Smuts' day. It seems to have anticipated Bergson in South Africa. As to young Smuts, it is but fair to him to mention that, at one time, he was destined to become a clergyman ! At the same time, these utterances of his no doubt had

[1] The article then deals with Truth, finding in the Person (the capitals are Smuts') the highest manifestation of truth. The profoundest Truth, he says, is man's individuality. Science has burrowed deeply in order to work out laws, but the history of Humanity will ultimately convince Science that Personality is above Law, that, in fact, "no law is thinkable without the existence of Personality, law being but the very faintest recognition of the harmonious form in which Personality reveals its essence. We do not believe in pantheistic Oneness if that means the disappearance of the Individual into the All, and the resolving of that All into Nothingness ; we believe in a Unity where all individuals are filled with the only Reality : indivisible Truth."

a distinctly practical bearing; it would be passing strange if, while writing the article, he was not thinking of some of the influences making for religious intolerance in our generally tolerant country. The translations given fail to do justice to the vigorous, clear-cut style of the original. The "enthusiasm" of which he speaks must have inspired his diction. The quality of his Dutch far surpasses that of the average South African student (especially of those days), and is a compliment to Professor Mansvelt, afterwards Superintendent of Education in the South African Republic, who was his teacher.

The same magazine, in its issue of December 1890, contains an article on "The Commerce and Prosperity of the Netherlands during the Eighty-Years War." To men apt to look on the General Smuts of to-day as an arch-materialist, it will no doubt come as a surprise to learn that he considered the history of Holland of especial importance because of "its moral value." Even a superficial knowledge of his real character would, however, lead us to expect his admiration for the "imperturbable patience, the immutable constancy" of the burghers of Holland in their struggle against Spanish tyranny. In passing, he claims that Nature, for all her benevolence towards man, has no room for the parasite, which is doomed to degradation and subsequently to complete annihilation. He traces the development of Dutch character as the result of the constant fight carried on against the forces of the ocean. The acme of material, industrial prosperity, he says, would not have availed the old Hollanders, had they lacked the higher impulses that marked them out as men of destiny. The problems confronting them were fraught with issues closely related to the eternal foundations of society and religion. He contrasts, with the highest approval, their free trade principles with the monopolistic tendencies of "Hansa-dom."[1]

[1] The following passage is characteristic: "But, for all that, Holland was never able to send its roots down into the soil of Java. There is no hope of any empire in the Dutch Indies where the Teutonic race

A little farther on we read that "it is the spirit alone that will not die. That which is temporal is fleeting. . . . The Hollanders of the seventeenth century were not too busy to take an interest in matters ecclesiastical and literary; in all those things which ennobled, or at any rate purported to ennoble, the soul of man. . . . In our days the goal of statecraft in Europe is the material wealth and progress of the nations or, rather, of the well-to-do classes —truly, by no means an advance on the old Dutch system! Are their efforts successful? Let the Strikes answer this question! If South Africa is to be great indeed, and not to be merely inflated with the wind of Johannesburg, its greatness will have to depend on its moral civilization, on the sincerity of the striving of its sons for that which is on high, no matter by what road they mean to travel in their upward course. No chimera, this! It is as true as the Law of History. . . . Where is the descendant who reads of the great deeds of his ancestors, where is the member of the great Teutonic race . . . who will not feel the greater and stronger, as an Afrikander, a Teuton, a man?"

It is a little pathetic to realize that, when the student of twenty, in the fullness of time first attained to real power, the circumstances of his own race were such that he was bound—in the interests of subsequent spiritual progress—to make material welfare his primary aim. And no less pathetic to reflect that Strikes should loom very large in the subsequent political career of this young dreamer; for

(*het germaansche ras*) could work out its future. Java will continue to be an Oriental State, under the control of Holland. How different a position in South Africa! The foundations, laid by the Hollanders at the Cape, on which the great Empire of the South will one day rear itself, are deep down, immovable in their profundity (*onwankelbaar diep*)." In this strain, the writer goes on to foretell the realization of a South Africa that will resemble a "stately temple from the hand of the Great Architect. The material will be of the noblest produced by the Old World. The nobility and grandeur of ancient Holland are immortal. . . . You will find them blended here with the lighter genius of France, with the deeper colours of English practical sense."

the experience of Aristide Briand has had its counterpart under the Southern Cross. These things were mercifully hidden from the idealist of Stellenbosch; nevertheless, he had his visions. With the strength and clarity of a trumpet blast, with the impelling force of mighty inspiration, comes the passage:

"Who, having felt the heart-beat of the motherland call unto his own heart, could fail to respond to the need for rivalling the heroic deeds of Old Europe, perchance in nobler realms? Let no man to whom the call cometh hide his light under a bushel; rather let him join it unto his brother's, that thus we may witness the rising of a sun whose rays shall light the future of South Africa."

After leaving Stellenbosch, young Smuts went to Cambridge, where his early promise was amply fulfilled. The *Zuid Afrikaan* (Cape Town) of July 1892 refers to ". . . Mr. Smuts who, having gained the Ebden scholarship last year, thanks to his double B.A., passed first in Law at Cambridge." "Medico," on the 22nd of June, wrote to the *Cape Times* from St. Mary's Hospital, London, W.: "Smuts' success is unprecedented in Cambridge annals. He took both Parts I and II of the Law Tripos at the same time, was placed first in the first class of each, and has been awarded the George Long prize in Roman Law and Jurisprudence, a prize only awarded in cases of special merit. On referring to the Cambridge Calendar, you will find that this is quite unparalleled." We find that in December 1894 "the Council of Legal Education awarded to Smuts, J. C., Middle Temple, a special prize of £50 for the best examination in Constitutional Law (English and Colonial) and Legal History."

While at Cambridge, he contributed to *Christ's College Magazine* (1893) an article on "Law—a Liberal Study," in which he took up the cudgels on behalf of his profession against those who tried to depreciate it by over-emphasizing its practical aspect. This article is to be commended to such critics of General Smuts as are doing their best to raise prejudice against him on the score of his "utilitarianism." A liberal study, the article says, is one that liberalizes

"or gives to its students the wonderful something which the moderns call culture." This sentence as well as the context makes it clear that "culture" to the writer connoted development in the best and widest sense of the term—not a one-sided knowledge. To use his own words: "That individual possesses the greatest culture who has, through associations with nature and the individual and collective life of past and present humanity, learnt to think deepest, feel most, and see farthest." He adds that, "according to this view, even Senior Wranglers may possess some culture" (!). He finds the weakness of literature as an instrument of culture in the "confusion of the permanent and the temporal, the universal and particular elements, bound up with its very existence as literature." It is claimed that ". . . along the channels of Law are flowing the most permanent currents of human thought and activity. The greatest work that can be done in this world is the harmonization, in accordance with the law of freedom, of the subjective with the objective, of the unit with the whole. It endeavours to combine the opposing forces that respectively fight for *meum* and *tuum* into a working harmony."

We find an echo of the strong individualism of his earlier years in the phrase: "The Person is recognized more and more. The rights of Personality become more and more inviolable."

An article from his hand appeared in the *Stellenbosch Student's Annual* of 1893–4. The opening sentences dispel the idea—sedulously fostered nowadays—that the writer must be considered a megalomaniac, whose one idea is that he, and he alone, is to be the arbiter of his fellow-citizens' fate. "The times are out of joint," he says, "now as in the days of Hamlet, the difference being that no mortal man now labours under the delusion that he was born to set them right." He goes on to state that, instead of the individual reformer, we now have associations, propagandist bodies, etc.[1]

[1] The foundations of Society are examined, and these conclusions reached: "The question is, what will be the relation of the State to the

The article concludes with a brief reference to social and religious anarchism, represented respectively by Bakounin and Tolstoi. Europe, the writer says, may yet need the one as well as the other. I shall leave it to the reader to draw his own conclusions concerning the development of one whose static energy showed itself in the quietly philosophical articles of the youth of nineteen, but whose dynamic force is here beginning to break through in the adult. It is a remarkable fact that, so far, it has chiefly fallen to the lot of General Smuts to defend the convenience, nay, the safety, of the many against the passions of the few. Contemporary South Africa might sincerely welcome a Tolstoi. It may be doubted whether there would be room for a Bakounin, while Jan Smuts is still with us. So far, the miniature Bakounins in our midst have not been too successful!

The same *Annual*, for 1894–5, contains a poem, "Love and Life (a Fragment)," signed J. C. S., from which the following may be quoted:

> Long are the coming years,
> Counted by lovers' tears,
> When, having lived together,
> Their parted days begin.

We get a description of the parting of two lovers, and it is just possible that it had some personal application. There is no incontrovertible proof that J. C. S. and J. C. Smuts are one and the same. But this I know, that J. C. Smuts had not been in Stellenbosch long before it

individual? Will it favour the development of the individual . . . or will it not rather weigh like a deadly incubus on the individual, dwarfing him to the dull commonplace of paralysed existence, to the level of the State-fed pauper? . . . Society is mostly founded on convenience; human nature is grounded in passion. If ever, in the course of a wrong development, Society sets itself against the individual, the convenience of the many against the primary requirements of the individual, then convenience and passion will have to measure their relative forces. It must be a very transcendent convenience that finally asserts itself against human passion."

was observed that he usually walked to College in the morning at a time when a certain Sibylla Margaretha Krige was somewhere near. The lady was a little younger than J. C. Smuts. She was a daughter of Mr. Japie Krige, whose brother was Mr. W. Krige, father of the present Speaker of the Union House of Assembly. Mr. Japie Krige lived at Klein Libertas, Stellenbosch. The great Voortrekker, Piet Retief (who was born at Wellington), was his grand-uncle.

We shall meet Miss Sibylla Margaretha again. Let it suffice, for the present, to mention that she was one of the cleverest students of her day. By all accounts, the interest she took in J. C. Smuts was hardly less than the attention paid by J. C. Smuts to her; her pride in him, even then, is supposed to have been greater than the two combined. About this time many magazine and newspaper articles appeared at Stellenbosch and Capetown, the authorship of which was attributed to this energetic and patriotic young lady. It is said, moreover, that some of the poetry that found its way into print during this period read suspiciously like her style. Some go even farther, alleging that this poetry was to a considerable extent the answering call to lyrics appearing above the J. C. S. initials. Be that as it may, I am not hard-hearted enough to become inquisitorial concerning matters of this description. One might contend that no character sketch of a striking personality is really complete without a psychological study of that personality's *alter ego*, but let that pass!

In the year 1895 Mr. Advocate Smuts, as he had then become, returned from Cambridge to his native country. His stay in Europe had left him essentially unchanged, but no young man can spend two or three of the most impressionable and important years of his life at Cambridge without coming to some extent under the spell of that ancient seat of learning. It may even be said that it would be difficult for a student from a young country such as South Africa to escape altogether the mellowing influence of any university of Western Europe. And so we may be

sure that for young Smuts there were consequences resulting from his temporary absence from his own land. His mental outlook, his sense of perspective, his appreciation of the country in which he had studied, his understanding of the lessons taught by history, must have been enlarged by what he had seen and heard. All this counts for comparatively little, however, as against a man's inner self, and that remained what it had always been. At Cambridge he did not altogether divorce himself from the life of his fellow-students; yet he was rarely seen at purely social functions. When sun and youth were on the lawn, he was generally to be found behind the curtains of the library, poring over all manner of books and developing a pasty complexion. Although no definite utterances of his to that effect have come to light, it may be concluded from chance remarks that the atmosphere of the place was not in all respects to his taste. Possibly, he misjudged the Cambridge undergraduate. Your average Englishman is about as undemonstrative as your South African Dutchman, and Smuts, though not averse from moving in mathematically intellectual orbits, may have felt chilled by constant contact with others who were doing the same. His epigram about culture and the Senior Wrangler would indicate as much. In any case, we do not know of many real or lasting friendships formed by him at Cambridge.

He was duly admitted by the Supreme Court at Cape Town, and there began to practise his profession.

MRS. SMUTS IN 1889.

III

CAPE TOWN TO KIMBERLEY

LET other countries answer for themselves—in South Africa the junior advocate, be he ever so learned and eloquent, usually finds the road to recognition a long and uphill one. If wise, and not over-scrupulous with regard to the interests of the poor journalists whose bread he is taking out of their mouths, he will try his hand at a little newspaper work during the years of waiting and watching. If otherwise, he will combine with fellow-juniors to play bridge. If ambitious, he will not be satisfied with the triumphs of the written word, but will add his quota to the sum total of verbal political wisdom. You will judge as to the sagacity of Mr. Advocate Smuts.

We know that, towards the end of 1895, he contributed to both Dutch and English newspapers at Cape Town. It will not be right to extend our inquiries as to authorship too far, in the absence of signature, but some of these contributions furnish quite as clear internal evidence as if the writer's autograph had been attached. There can be no harm in quoting a few characteristic sentences from these. Dr. van Oordt's work on *Plato and his Times* is reviewed in both languages. Advocate Smuts calls Plato an "aristocrat of aristocrats," remarking that "while society in general became gradually more democratic, thus getting farther and farther removed from Plato's ideal, in South Africa we find a society in the course of formation, very much after Plato's style. The difference is this, that Plato's Republic contained no poor whites, and that justice, fair-

ness, and impartiality cemented Plato's classes, whereas we, in South Africa, can strive but slowly for the attainment of this ideal state."

A *Cape Times* article on the same subject will commend itself to people acquainted with the General Smuts of later years : "Convinced that Greek society was rotten with vice, with the prevalence of *demagogy* and the spirit of *pseudo-science*, he turned away from it in despair. But the most fatal demand in Plato's social theory is traceable partly to Greek society, yet largely to his own extreme aristocracy."

That the writer was neither a mere philosophizing arm-chair politician nor a hide-bound lawyer is shown by the remainder of the article, in which he deals with the position of the natives in South Africa. The result of the experiment of a society in which the white man has assumed the position of the aristocratic overseer will, he says, depend on the justice and self-restraint of the superior majority.

Another *Cape Times* article of the same year contains the following pregnant sentence : "Legislatures propose but, as Mr. Herbert Spencer showed long ago, there are other forces which dispose, and shape their rough-hewn ends in a way highly surprising to them." It is *not* surprising to see an individualist, such as Mr. Smuts had shown himself to be in his student days, now quoting a thoroughgoing champion of non-interference.

A little further on, his attitude towards the Imperial factor will be discussed. What that attitude was, before the political earthquake of 1895–6 shook the whole of South Africa, will be gathered from a *Cape Times* article of 1895, which discussed the question as to why so many nations (particularly France and Germany) were then anti-British. The article postulated that the Germans were not only of the same stock as the English, but harboured no bitter memories against them. "They are not vainglorious and are usually taken to be serious and large-minded people. . . . The true explanation is not British pharisaism but British success. It is the success with which Great Britain is pursuing the policy of Colonial expansion, and the

comparative failure of the attempts of other peoples in the same direction, which lies at the root of this international dislike of Great Britain." He winds up with a contention that will hardly be contradicted by any South African, even in our days, viz. that "under the British Flag, there is no better colonist than thrifty Hans."

In October of the same year *Ons Land* contained an article, probably written by Advocate Smuts, criticizing Dr. Muir (Superintendent of Education) for consistently appointing imported officials, instead of looking to the local supply. As a Minister of the Transvaal and the Union, General Smuts has often been charged with being indifferent (to say the least of it) to the claims of South Africans in this respect, but the article in question hardly tallies with that theory.

About this time Advocate Smuts took a trip to the Transvaal, and no one who knows his style can fail to assign to his pen several articles, appearing mostly in the Dutch Press of October 1895. Some of these were printed serially in *De Volksbode* (*The People's Messenger*) under the heading of "Een Reisje naar Transvaal." At that period the journey from Cape Town to Johannesburg occupied three nights and two days. The train left at night, which prevented the traveller from seeing the beauties of the Drakenstein, Tulbagh Kloof, Mitchell's Pass, Worcester, and the Hex River Valley; when he woke up he was in the Karroo. Advocate Smuts argued, in his first article, that such a time-table was not apt to prejudice a traveller in favour of South African scenery. He might have added that many an immigrant presumes to judge the whole country from what he sees on such an ill-timed journey. We have improved a little on the procedure of those days, but even now a train for the North leaves Cape Town every night, and newcomers, always fond of jumping at conclusions, will write about "South Africa" when they really mean the Karroo. The Karroo has a deep and abiding beauty of its own, but the novice can hardly be expected to take that in at a glance, especially if the glance be from a carriage-window. These last few remarks are

mine ; Mr. Smuts was not verbose, though he did devote part of his travel-talk to a comparison between Transvaal landscape and Cape scenery, much to the disadvantage of the former. To be candid, he was in this respect as rash as the average Uitlander, judging the Transvaal not by the Woodbush and other famous beauty spots of the Republic, but by the small portion of it that he saw on his first trip.

However, he was not merely an æsthete. Some of our latter-day "patriots" delight in painting him as a sort of over-intelligent Frankenstein, stalking through the human throng with scarcely a human feeling in him. To such as these I dedicate the following sentence: "It is highly reprehensible that the Railway Department should not have made better provision for third-class passengers." He particularly mentions a mother with six children whom he saw crowded into one stuffy compartment, the weather being unconscionably hot. Third-class passengers were more numerous at that time, when there was a boom in immigration, than they are now ; he remarked on the fact that they "paid for the first-class set." There were no saloons in the "third" then. The seats were hard and the compartments generally uncomfortable. The traveller found Laingsburg, in the Karroo, an inferno in summer, and Prince Albert Road Station a shade worse.

The articles were impressionistic. Speaking of the Transvaal: "What a dead past," he exclaimed, "what a tremendous present, what an uncertain future!" He disliked the noise and bustle of the Rand, which was destined to become a good deal more noisy and more bustling as time went on and the population increased ; as motor-cars intensified the rush of traffic, and expensive hotels added to that species of glamour so beloved of the Randite. Pretoria pleased him much better: "I was agreeably surprised by the aristocratic quiet pervading this handsome little town." It must not be forgotten that Pretoria, when Mr. Smuts gave it this praise, had no electric trams. It was a place of thatched roofs and rose gardens, of babbling water-furrows and majestic weeping-willows, of stately bearded

men and Rembrandtesque old dames. Alas, that one should have to say "was"!

In Johannesburg he recognized the embodiment of "that colossal materialism which is destined to play a great part in South Africa." A subsequent article described the struggle between the industrial population and the pastoral State. "We can sympathize," the writer tells us, "with the ideals of a farmer-President." The same contribution contained a diatribe against the Hollander officials in the Transvaal, which did these men a little less than justice.[1]

I shall quote later on from another utterance by Advocate Smuts, made when he had had opportunities of going into the problem presented by the activities of the Hollanders in the Transvaal. By that time he was able to see things in their true perspective, but in 1895 he persisted in blaming them for inspiring President Kruger's attitude on the Drifts question. It would take me too far afield to deal with this in detail. It is curious to reflect, however, that in the year of Grace 1916 a Government of which General Smuts was a member (even though he was away among the Germans and the tsetse fly at the particular moment) introduced a Bill into the Parliament of the Union, part of which was strongly reminiscent of Drifts. The Cape itself had, shortly before Union, considered it necessary to differentiate against goods carried by ox-waggon, in competition with the railway. That is exactly what President Kruger did in 1895, and what the Union re-enacted in 1916. But in 1895 Advocate Smuts was bound

[1] The "Hollander question" was one of the burning questions of the day. There was a good deal of professional rivalry between Transvaal officials who came from Holland and those who had left the Cape to try their luck up North. One can easily understand that Advocate Smuts, coming to Pretoria as a stranger with introductions to kinsmen and friends of kinsmen, would obtain somewhat one-sided information on this particular point. In Johannesburg, too, he was not likely to be predisposed in favour of the Hollanders, to whom a disproportionate amount of the difficulties then besetting the Republic was attributed by the anti-Republican Press. These officials had their faults, individually and as a body, but their worst enemy has never been able to say that in the latter capacity they did not do their best according to their lights.

to see things mainly from the *then* Cape standpoint, expressed strongly by Mr. W. P. Schreiner, now High Commissioner for the Union in London. Mr. Schreiner, as Attorney-General in the Rhodes-Bond Ministry of the day, was in favour of using the "battering-ram" when the Transvaal closed its gates. There is no evidence that Advocate Smuts ever went quite so far as that, in spite of his youth, inexperience, natural predilections, and political surroundings. His strong South African sentiment was vented in the article in question. "The Transvaal," it concluded, "has become the heritage of Young South Africa. Paarl and Stellenbosch are, at Johannesburg and Pretoria, the bonds of brotherhood between the Transvaal and the Cape, by which the Colony will ever be in the van of the wider development of the northern State."

Almost simultaneously, an article appeared in the *Cape Times* on the "discovery" of Worcester. It rhapsodized on the grandeur of the mountains enclosing the Hex River Valley: "From these valleys, with their unsurpassed natural object-lessons in colours, shall yet come the future artists of South Africa." This prophecy is now in course of realization. It is a remarkable one as the mere *obiter dictum* of a railway-passenger. Or did he, at any time, explore the unsuspected beauties of the lonely ravines harbouring Hex River tributaries, protected from the clangour of the iron horse? Did he drink in the unutterable glory of a sunset on a warm, red sandstone of Keeromberg's top? Did he see the magic of a silver moon on its krantzes? Did he behold that moon, vanishing reluctantly behind the lofty rock-towers, leaving a softer, subtler fairy palace, swathed in the impalpable mist of dreams? Maybe he needed not those signs, for keen insight and true artistry are seldom far apart.

But we have to change the scene from the enchanting kloofs of the Western Province to the dusty, squalid alleys of Kimberley—from the stimulating freedom of the open air to the gaslit platform and its politics. The times were

indeed "out of joint," and Advocate Smuts thought he could at least do his share in mending them.

To understand what follows one must bear in mind a few points that are sometimes forgotten. Political parties were not clearly defined in the Cape or, for the matter of that, anywhere in South Africa. The Afrikander Bond was a strong organization, but its leaders either did not desire power or could not attain it, except by making alliances. They had no clear majority in the Cape Parliament. Different combinations were formed from time to time, so that the group system may be said to have existed in reality, if not in name. The Bond proper looked almost exclusively to the Dutch for support in the country; in the Assembly it co-operated with English-speaking members. Mr. Jan Hofmeyr, who was the *de facto* leader of the Bond, sincerely desired the co-operation of English and Dutch. He effected a junction of forces with Mr. Rhodes, who had a large personal following, if not exactly a compact party behind him. This arrangement was objected to by most of the English voters, who blamed Mr. Rhodes, and by some of the Dutch, whose strictures were reserved for Mr. Hofmeyr and his colleagues. Criticism was particularly violent in the Transvaal, where Mr. Hofmeyr was by no means *persona grata* after the part he had taken in the conclusion of the Swazieland Treaty and the prevention of the Adendorff Trek. President Kruger distrusted the power of the Kimberley purse, and the Transvaal newspapers that were friendly to his administration frequently conveyed hints to the Cape Afrikanders as to the undesirability of the Rhodes alliance, these hints being occasionally more forcible than polite. The Cape Dutch retaliated by the suggestion that a somewhat more liberal policy in the Transvaal, towards both the ordinary Uitlanders and the Afrikanders of other than Transvaal birth, was a necessity.

About the month of October 1895 a joint article by Mr. and Mrs. Cronwright (Olive Schreiner) on "The Political Situation" appeared in the *Diamondfields' Advertiser*. In

this article the Hofmeyr-Rhodes combination was attacked as tending to promote retrogressive legislation in regard to native affairs, Customs duties on the necessaries of life, and so forth. On its practical side, the article advocated a strong and widespread propaganda, especially in the towns, in favour of "Progressivism." It is almost needless to add that the word "progressive" had not then acquired the meaning claimed for it when Sir Gordon Sprigg took office in 1896.

On Tuesday the 29th of October 1895 Mr. Advocate Smuts, acting, no doubt, in accordance with Mr. Hofmeyr's wishes, addressed a large audience in the Kimberley Town Hall on "The Political Situation." It was a full-dress occasion, under the presidency of the Mayor. The speaker adopted the course that the average adroit pleader would have adopted in similar circumstances, as appears from the very full report in the *Diamondfields' Advertiser*. "If I were to address you on the various debatable measures," he began, "and on the administrative features characteristic of our party politics, I should have to don the garb of a professional party politician, which would ill suit my youth and inexperience." But in spite of this disclaimer, he dealt somewhat elaborately with at least a few of the questions indicated. To begin with, he claimed that the Government of the day was truly progressive. He mentioned that, during his stay in Europe, he had done his best to train himself "in other schools of political and sociological thought." Two problems, he continued, occupied the minds of the electors to the exclusion of almost every other consideration: the consolidation of the white races and the relation of the white to the coloured community.

And here it is necessary to remark that among Cape politicians there had been several noted negrophilists, of whom the late Mr. Saul Solomon was perhaps the best known. Their influence threatened to overthrow the traditional Afrikander policy, embodied without ambiguity in the Constitution of the South African Republic, where it was laid down that the nation recognized no equality

as between white and black. In practice the Republics carried this principle of inequality to a length that did not commend itself to the average Cape Afrikander. At the same time, the latter looked upon the theories of men like the late Mr. Solomon as hopeless fads. Mr. Rhodes invented, or, at any rate, championed strongly in later years, the phrase of "equal rights for all *civilized* men south of the Zambesi," but in his Glen Grey Act he showed that he was not averse to some discrimination. This Act was based, roughly, on the principle that the native, enjoying as he did a good many of the advantages that are only bestowed by civilized surroundings, should give something in return. The best tonic for him was considered to be work. Now, the Glen Grey Act encouraged him to work by taxing him if he did not; or, to put the matter differently, it partly relieved him from taxation if he did. This was considered by extreme negrophilists to be tantamount to forced labour, and Mr. Smuts had come to rebut the charge. Before doing so, he paid attention to the position of the white race, and to the animosities dividing it. "Unless the white race closes its ranks," he warned his hearers, "its position will soon become untenable in the face of the overwhelming majority of prolific barbarism."

He recognized the fusing power of railways and commerce, but considered it too materialistic to stand the strain to which it was to be subjected. "It is something far stronger and subtler that we want. We want sentiment! We want those invisible links of union that are harder than stone and tougher than the toughest metal. In a word, we want a great South African nationality, a pervading national sentiment," was his watchword.

He drew attention to the influence of the democratic idea in Europe, but gave it as his opinion that "the idea of nationality has exercised an even mightier influence on civilization than the idea of democracy itself. In the eighteenth century, with the spread of materialism and the liberal, superficial French philosophy, the name of patriot

became almost a term of reproach." "But the Revolution," he continued, "swept away the sham of cosmopolitanism." The conquests of Napoleon called on the peoples of Europe to fight for "their national existence." After a few more sentences in this strain, he asked: "What has been done to foster this great national consciousness which forms our political ideal, and who has done it? The Bond was the first to start the idea of nationality in Cape politics and history. Our political life was deadened with apathy and civic indifference. The tiny, though potent, germ of nationality that has already produced such a remarkable transformation is yet destined to leaven the whole lump of our South African peoples. Before the statesman's eye of Sir George Grey and others the vision of a United South Africa has flitted. But it was merely a *constitutional* idea to them. It had first to become a *national* idea, before it could become practically operative. There must be a people before there can be a State. There must be a national unity before there can be a political union. This the founders of the Bond felt."

These words must be an eye-opener to men who have attributed to General Smuts a too mechanical turn of mind; who have suspected him of national indifferentism, of ignoring the deeper and finer forces that go to the making of an organic community. It is clear that his training as a barrister, though bound to make itself felt in his maiden speech, was very far from having made him a legalist or one who thought that any consummation could be effected by Act of Parliament.

He then came nearer home, and dwelt upon the discovery of diamonds in the Cape. In passing, he had referred to the antagonism existing in the Transvaal between the mining population and the farmers: "A dark cloud overhangs the future of Transvaal politics." He reminded his audience that the same danger had existed in the Cape. "Happily matters have taken a different turn here. Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Hofmeyr have discovered a common basis of political action. I have no doubt this represents a forward step in

the healthy development of the national movement." And further: "It at once follows that the Continental European Powers ought to be kept as much as possible outside the region of South African political strife. . . . The position of Great Britain is, of course, peculiar. She has made the greatest sacrifices on behalf of South Africa. She guards our coasts . . . But she is wisely *leaving us more and more to ourselves.*"

One of the points urged by the critics of the coalition was the incompatibility of Mr. Rhodes' responsibility in the North with his independence as Cape Premier. Mr. Smuts devoted some attention to this criticism; he could not agree that there was any essential flaw in the dual position. This opinion, of course, eventually turned out to be quite incorrect, and when that happened the Power guarding our coasts showed a constantly diminishing tendency to adopt the policy of "leaving us more and more to ourselves."

Mr. Smuts proceeded to defend Fair Trade as opposed to the Free Trade demanded by his opponents; said something about the future South African "Confederation" (a term then employed to indicate closer union), and finally dealt with "the second fundamental proposition of South African politics." Almost at the outset he declared that "the theory of democracy, as currently understood and practised in Europe and America, is inapplicable to the coloured races of South Africa. . . . You cannot safely apply to the barbarous and semi-barbarous natives the advanced political principles and practice of the foremost peoples of civilization. . . . Too often we make the mistake of looking upon democracy as a deduction from abstract principles, instead of regarding it rather as the outcome of practical politics."

These words, to-day regarded almost as commonplaces by the vast majority of people in South Africa (including many of the enlightened natives themselves), were anathema to a considerable proportion of the Cape electorate at that time; it required courage to utter them boldly. Mr. Smuts, however, had no hesitation in calling a spade a spade. He touched on the native franchise question and the Glen

Grey Act, reminding his audience that "even Mr. Sauer is in favour of class legislation." He pointed out that purely intellectual education, "complemented in the case of the whites by moral culture and the religious tradition of many centuries, gives, in the case of natives unbalanced by moral traditions, a stimulus to those insidious vices of our white civilization to which the native falls such an easy and hopeless prey. It is by developing his physical manhood, by increasing his moral and social stamina, that alone this great work of raising the coloured races can be done. . . . Let us defy the ideal optimist, let us defy the sentimental cranks and well-meaning mischief-makers!"

He wound up by defending Rhodes from the charge of opportunism and corruption.

We are told that "a most cordial vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Smuts for his admirable address, which was listened to with great attention and was frequently applauded."

Ons Land of the 31st October 1895 delivered itself of a eulogy upon the speech, which was indeed a remarkable performance, coming from one so young and inexperienced. The very fact that a man who had only recently left an English university could command the attention of a large audience in one of the principal towns of South Africa proved it to be such. It was more than the effort of a special pleader, sent to advocate the cause of a particular political party. On the main issues Mr. Smuts spoke with transparent sincerity, with enthusiasm and devotion to the great ideal that was expressed so eloquently by his words.

There was but one fly in the ointment. The fly was the complete failure on the part of the Dutch leaders in the Cape to realize that, in concluding an alliance with Mr. Rhodes, they had built their hopes of racial reconciliation on foundations of sand!

Two months later the Raid took place. It is to be feared that, even now, any attempt to make the average reader outside South Africa understand the full significance of that event will be a hopeless failure. It is equally likely

that a plain statement might offend many people of otherwise well-balanced judgment. I shall therefore be sparing in the use of adjectives, but it is impossible to throw adequate light on this crucial point in Mr. Smuts' career without devoting a few sentences to the events of 1895–6. This can easily be done without bitterness to-day. There never was much feeling, even amongst the most rabid Republicans, against Dr. Jameson himself. It would perhaps be straining the meaning of the word "courage" if that term were applied to the recklessness with which he risked his own life as well as the lives of a great many others. But, in any case, every one recognized that he was but an instrument, even if he did upset that historic "apple-cart." The Johannesburg Reformers, too, were comparatively small men in the game. It is true that the libel on the Boers contained in the "women and children" cablegram still rankles in the minds of thousands, although so many other memories have been wisely relegated to oblivion.

The great harm done in those days was rooted in the terrible breach of good faith committed towards the Cape Dutch by their political associate, Mr. Rhodes. The English in South Africa were almost unanimous in acclaiming Rhodes after the betrayal. He complained of the "unctuous rectitude" displayed by his countrymen in Europe. There was nothing, or next to nothing, to complain about in South Africa on that score. Those who had criticized him most strongly when he co-operated with Mr. Hofmeyr were now among his most devoted followers. Something similar happened in 1915, when thousands of Dutchmen applauded General De Wet for actions that were legally indefensible. "Blood is thicker than water" was their motto, and that seems to have been the dominant idea in the beginning of 1896 among the other section of the population. But with this vital difference that, whereas at least one-half of the Dutch refused to go back on their legal and moral obligations in 1915, practically the whole of English-speaking South Africa applauded the men who in 1895–6 gave the cause of racial peace a stab in the back.

Not content with this, they jeered at the Boers whom they had been unable to take by surprise. What was worse, Mr. Hofmeyr and his associates were now painted in the blackest colours as racialists of the worst character, traitors to their flag, and what not!

Political enemies have since become reconciled; faults on both sides have been admitted, but whatever may be said to the detriment of the South African Dutch, no student of history, no one assessing the character and position of Mr. Smuts, can overlook the effect that was bound to be produced by the association of the Premier of a British Colony with the Raid. The mortification of Mr. Hofmeyr and his lieutenants (of whom Mr. Smuts was one) was most natural. If their outlook on the racial question, or rather on the attitude to be adopted for the nonce, became temporarily changed, whose was the blame? Apart from the position as between English and Dutch in South Africa itself, there was the Imperial factor to be considered. I shall leave an examination of all the circumstances surrounding the position of Great Britain towards this country to other hands. Yet it would be doing an injustice to Mr. Smuts, especially when his subsequent speeches come to be judged, if mention of this matter were entirely omitted. Rightly or wrongly (hardly a material point, as I am merely trying to convey some idea as to the impression created on the people of whom Mr. Smuts was one), what has been called the "white-washing" process at Westminster in connection with the Raid caused strong resentment among the Dutch. Both the attitude of Mr. Chamberlain and the marked friendliness displayed towards Mr. Rhodes by the Heir to the Throne further aggravated the position. Given the South African "sentiment" to which Mr. Smuts had appealed at Kimberley, this might have been expected. And yet the "loyalists" of those days in South Africa were not satisfied. They constantly and consistently asked for "more" until the crisis came.

It is true that, in summing up, I have somewhat anticipated events if regard is had only to the forces that drove

Mr. Smuts from the path he seemed to have marked out for himself at Kimberley. It is just as well, however, to bracket them together, and then be done with them, as far as possible. The indignation and pain that shot through the heart of practically every Dutchman at the time of the Raid itself were as genuine as they were poignant. Differences on details of policy were forgotten, and the Afrikanders of the Cape felt drawn as by a magnet to their kinsmen in the North. Currents of sentiment, the strength and value of which had been brought out in the Kimberley speech, were set in motion, and it was not long before Advocate Smuts went to join the men from whom, up till then, he had stood more or less aloof.

It only remains to add that, during the General Election of 1915 in the Union, a story was spread to the effect that "about the time of the Raid, Smuts was sent up by Rhodes to make a speech on his behalf at Kimberley, in which he defended the Chief Raider." The reader will be able to judge the truth of this assertion if he remembers that, whereas the speech was made in October, the Raid took place at the end of December. Misrepresentations of this nature are now poisoning the political life of South Africa, and it is but fair to say that some of those who are loudest in their exposure of them to-day were not entirely innocent of similar tactics in 1895–6. Their target was the organization with which Mr. Smuts had been for a brief spell connected. It is to be hoped that, just as those men learnt wisdom, his present detractors will yet realize that it is a prostitution of the sacred cause of patriotism to attempt to sully the fame of one of South Africa's greatest sons, merely because differences exist in regard to outlook and method.

IV

KIMBERLEY TO PRETORIA

MR. SMUTS' action aroused a storm of criticism, but it is not within the compass of this volume to quote from the many newspaper articles that were devoted to his maiden effort. The Bond organs naturally defended him. *Ons Land* of the 9th of November 1895 contained a leading article on the subject. The author of the Kimberley speech made no direct reply to the attacks, and, indeed, he may be said to have lived in seclusion during this period. As far as can be gathered, he never even met Mr. Rhodes personally. The only meeting between them of which there is any trace occurred some years before, while young Smuts was still a student at Stellenbosch. Mr. Rhodes paid the College an official visit, and Jan Smuts was selected to address him on behalf of the students. It is on record that Mr. Rhodes was greatly struck by the earnestness and the solidity of the speech, but he does not appear to have addressed any personal remarks to the student who made it.

Frequent visits were paid by Advocate Smuts to Stellenbosch as well as to the Malmesbury district; it is safe to say that there were reasons other than the purely family ones for these jaunts. Greatly as he was attached to his mother especially, and to the Miss Krige aforementioned, it is no exaggeration to maintain that the very soil on which his younger days had been passed drew him powerfully. He was passionately fond of the mountains. They had been the witnesses of his childhood's occupation and of the meditative rambles he used to take when at leisure in his

college days. Solitude attracted him by encouraging his day-dreams. Miss Krige first turned his thoughts from the realms of speculation to those of action. In a measure, it was she who gave him back to society. Her pragmatic patriotism was instrumental in strengthening his own, and in giving it a practical turn.

At Cape Town, too, he occasionally indulged his fondness of outdoor life by climbing Table Mountain. Those who were with him on those occasions state that he lacked sociability as a climbing companion. He never spoke much, and was usually a little ahead of the others while negotiating the slopes. Although fate took him away for many years from the Mecca of South African mountaineers, he never forgot the "Grey Father." When the Sessions of the Union Parliament called him back to Cape Town, he repeatedly spoke to me about plans for another ascent; I never had the privilege of piloting him up, however, because filial piety almost invariably took him to Riebeek at week-ends, so that he might visit his father during the long illness that marked the last years of the old gentleman's life. Without any wish to allege anything to the disadvantage of other nations, it may be noted in passing that family ties are particularly strong among the South African Dutch. Advocate Smuts is typical of his race in this respect, as in so many others.

He was sitting on the stoep of his parents' house when, on the 1st of January 1896 the tidings of Jameson's action reached him. What it must have meant to him, only those who have an inkling of the intensity of his feelings can understand. Since he has his share of human weaknesses, even his greatest admirer need but apply the elementary principles of psychology in order to justify the supposition that his resentment was fanned by the injury to his self-esteem caused by the complete falsification of his Kimberley utterance concerning Rhodes. The stronger a man's convictions, the more ardent his ideals, the severer must be the consequences when they suffer a shock so rude as comes but once in a lifetime. Blank despair ruled in

Smuts' mind. The University man disappeared. In his place there arose the primeval male, who feels that his tribe has been injured. For the moment, the South African—in its wider sense—in him was dead. The Dutchman only was alive, smarting under the lash. What he thought, what he felt, was reflected by the columns of the Dutch Press in those days. *Ons Land* at Cape Town, *De Express* at Bloemfontein, *De Volkstem* at Pretoria, vied with each other in advocating closer ties between the Cape Dutch and the Republics. A strongly anti-Imperial note was sounded. English South African newspapers were not slow to reply, and a state of tension soon came into existence such as has not been witnessed in South Africa either before or since.

But Advocate Smuts had learnt that silence is golden. It was a long time before his voice was again heard in public, and then it was in order that he might take his share in the struggle for the rights of the Dutch language —one of the principal results of the quickening of race consciousness among Afrikanders. On the 4th of September 1896 he spoke at Paarl as the examiner for Dutch, higher division, in the Taalbond competition.

"I feel proud and pleased," he said in the presence of several prominent and learned champions of his mother-tongue, "to be present at this brilliant assembly in furtherance of our national language movement. Our ancestors brought to these shores one particular plant that blossoms more luxuriantly than any other, the love of liberty and nationality. We have come to Paarl to warm our hearts at the sacred fire kindled by our forefathers, and in order to prepare for the grand task allotted to us. The word was recently passed round that Afrikanderdom no longer is what it used to be, that our hands, once so powerful, have become without strength. . . . It is a libel, and this meeting proves it to be a libel. The bulk of our people are still inspired by the unquenchable spirit of their ancestors. . . . We are fighting for the natural, just rights of our mother-tongue. It is our duty to do away with the injustice to which it has been subjected." After much more to the same effect, he wound up by assuring those who averred that the Dutch were running their heads against a stone wall of the leaders' determination to persevere until the goal should have been reached. The speech breathed a fiery eloquence.

In September 1896 *Ons Land* announced that Advocate Smuts would seek admission at the Transvaal Bar, and that "it would be a cause for regret if the Cape were to lose one of its cleverest, most promising sons. No doubt Afrikanders would appreciate his sacrifice if he decided to remain in the Colony after all." In October he contributed to the Cape Press a number of articles in which a more cordial understanding between the Colony and the Republics was strongly advocated.[1]

When he wrote thus, he had been admitted to practise in the Transvaal, and had settled at Johannesburg. His judgment had matured and become more generous; his old ideas of co-operation, his preference for the whole as opposed to a part, had come to the surface once again. This, however, does not imply any change of attitude on his part with regard to the unfortunate events of the January preceding, as was soon to become apparent. He had left for the Transvaal rather suddenly; some affairs of his in the Cape still awaited settlement. And then—there was, of course, Miss Krige! So it came about that he was back in the Bôland early in January 1897, when Mr. Gideon Krige, M.L.A., met him in the train and asked him to speak a few words at a political meeting to be held at Kuils River, near Stellenbosch. He yielded, and described Mr. Rhodes as a permanent barrier between English and Dutch. The meeting was one of a series organized in

[1] *Inter alia*, he dealt once more with the Hollander question in the Transvaal: "I am not pro-Hollander, but when the Transvaal struggled with poverty, when it was in sackcloth and ashes, our educated Cape men were not very eager to run after Cinderella. It was only from Holland that civil servants were to be obtained. It is but natural that those who stood by the country in those dark days should enjoy their share of the fat of the land now that prosperity has come. This also applies to Church matters. . . . Only in one way can the so-called Hollander question be solved, and that is by exemplary behaviour on the part of Colonial Afrikanders in the Transvaal. From what I have seen of the latter, they are destined to bring about a slow, quiet revolution in this country. They will bring Hollanders and Boers together, co-operating with both in the highest interests of the Transvaal and of South Africa."

order to protest against a proposed festive reception of Rhodes on his return from England. Why, Mr. Smuts asked, are people flocking together? To do Mr. Rhodes honour? No, it is not because they love him, but because they hate the Dutchman. He recapitulated the circumstances that had led up to the Raid, reminding his hearers of the finding of the Cape Select Committee, which by no means exonerated the former Premier. The speech was an impassioned one, but a substantial streak of commercial shrewdness ran through it: he did not forget to mention that the Colony might look for markets in the North. He defended himself from the charge, constantly brought against the Dutch in those days, of having kindled the fire of race-hatred. "It is not true!" he exclaimed. "We are moderate. It is they who have set the veld on fire. All we do is to lift up our voices in warning to England, so that she may know that the Afrikander Boer still stands where he stood in 1881. If England sends Rhodes back to us, the responsibility will be hers. The blood be on England's own head."

It will be seen that English critics, who have from time to time expressed surprise at the fact that the Jan Smuts of Kimberley (1895) enthusiastically made war on England (in 1899), can hardly have studied contemporary history very closely. They must have overlooked the very plain warnings given in the Bôland and the Zwartland during the first month of 1897, when the controversies that followed the Raid had set up such a mighty ferment.

On the 14th of January 1897, at Philadelphia, north of Cape Town, Mr. Smuts said that South Africa had seen stirring times in the past fifteen years and that, "if the same course were pursued, matters would become still more serious in the next fifteen years." It is interesting to recall the fact that Mr. Merriman also spoke, referring in appreciative terms to "Mr. Smuts' eloquent speech." But no less an authority than the *Kaffrarian Watchman* called Smuts a fire-eater and a political madman for his trouble.

As this is not a political history, it is unnecessary to give even a brief résumé of Mr. Smuts' speeches at the meetings he attended about this time, all held with the same object. It should be mentioned, however, that one of these took place at Malmesbury, where his father presided. An indirect attack was there made on him by Mr. T. Louw, M.L.A., one of the few Dutchmen of note who stuck to Mr. Rhodes through thick and thin. Mr. Louw objected to the ex-Premier being held up to scorn in his absence. Smuts resented the implied censure of his conduct. He reminded the audience that "Mr. Rhodes had had ample opportunity of accounting for his actions in public, without availing himself of it." He added that, even if Mr. Rhodes held out the grandest inducements after his return from England, every Afrikander should say, "I am not going to have anything to do with you."

The same evening the speaker left on his return to the Transvaal, but Friday, the 30th of April 1897, saw him back at Stellenbosch. One of his most prominent characteristics is an aversion from outward show and elaborate ceremonial. Yet it will perhaps come as a surprise to many of those who have only known him in later years, that barely any one except the persons most nearly concerned were aware of the object of his visit, viz. his marriage with Miss Krige. While her brothers and sisters were at school, the young couple went to the magistrate and the knot was tied. The parents, of course, were in the secret. On the 1st of May, Mr. and Mrs. Smuts left for their new home at Johannesburg.

A few months before, a complimentary dinner had been given to Mr. Smuts at Johannesburg to mark the close of a series of lectures on law and jurisprudence. The menu was an excellent one. History is silent as to whether a delicate compliment was implied in the selection of Pouding Diplomate! The newspapers of the day inform us that "the company broke up in the small hours of the morning." This was a Johannesburg custom, but it may be doubted whether Mr. Smuts was addicted to it. Among those

present were several men who were destined to make their mark, e.g. Dr. Manfred Nathan, the late Advocate Mostyn Cleaver, and Mr. W. A. Hofmeyr, who is now the organizing secretary of the National Party in the Cape.

Well do I remember the Advocate Smuts of those days. He was a familiar figure in Commissioner Street, and he did not resemble the General Smuts of 1916 in the slightest degree. Imagine a pale-faced, tremendously serious-looking young man, who appeared much taller than he really was, owing to his thinness; given to holding converse with the pavement, always in thought, and seemingly taking no notice of what went on around him; with high cheek-bones and the hungry look that betokens the man whose mind is grappling with many problems, prominent among which, no doubt, was the question why his energy could not find adequate outlet. He did not plead in any of the several *causes célèbres* that ornamented—or otherwise—the records of the Transvaal Courts in those days. His sterling capacity, however, soon gained him a reputation among lawyers, while his fame penetrated even into the world of politics.

There was anything but a surfeit of men who were both naturally clever and highly educated in the Transvaal of those days. When Dr. Leyds resigned the State Secretaryship, and the late Mr. Abraham Fischer refused to exchange Bloemfontein for Pretoria, one of the names mentioned in connection with the vacancy was that of Mr. Smuts. Considering the importance of the office, especially during those stirring times, no mean compliment was paid him by the *Volkstem*, which was generally regarded as President Kruger's organ, when it suggested Mr. Smuts as a suitable candidate for the post, enthusiastically enumerating the qualities that fitted him for it. The Johannesburg *Star* of the 25th of May 1898 said of him: "His visit to Pretoria yesterday was made with the view of seeing how the land lay." The *Rand Post*, a young, Conservative newspaper, thought that his candidature was not receiving any serious support, owing to his youth. How badly informed the *Star*

was as to his political pedigree will appear from a statement contained in its issue of the 26th of May : "The story goes that in 1895 Mr. Rhodes discovered Mr. Smuts in Griqualand West, and brought him to the front. Soon after he fell under the influence of the Bond, whose cause he has since espoused" (!).

The same paper, on the 2nd of June, announced that he had been offered the post of State Attorney, adding: "He is able and conscientious, but though he may have all the precociousness of a Pitt, we still consider that twenty-eight is rather too young an age for the State Attorney of the South African Republic." The article went on to recommend Dr. F. E. T. Krause—then Public Prosecutor at Johannesburg, now a distinguished King's Counsel—for the post.

The young man's moral courage was proved by the fact that he had supported President Kruger during the Kotzé crisis. The then Chief Justice of the Transvaal claimed the right to test the validity of resolutions passed by the Volksraad. The Government upheld the contention that Parliament was supreme, and Mr. Justice Kotzé left the Transvaal Bench. At Johannesburg the legal practitioners almost unanimously supported the "Chief," and according to the *Star* Mr. Smuts, having been boycotted for his attitude, now received the State Attorneyship as a reward. I am inclined to think that President Kruger did not make important appointments on this extremely opportunist principle, whatever may have been the case in connection with the luck of some minor officials.

The *Star* mentioned that Advocate Smuts, "though not particularly popular with his learned colleagues, is spoken of as an able lawyer of good repute, and industrious." This encomium was certainly well deserved, and one to be noticed in a country where many people grew rich quickly, where industry was not a common virtue, even among counsel learned in the law. I recollect visiting, at about this time, an eminent pleader from Pretoria in a Johannesburg hotel, shortly before 10 a.m., the hour at which he

was due to state his case on my principals' behalf before the Circuit Court. He was in bed, snoring gently, gently. It was the "morning after the night before." A cup of tea was standing, untasted, on his chair. Alongside it I saw, unopened, his brief. He yawned, but *not* gently, *not* gently. He was a big man in his way, and so I said nothing to our client, particularly as he won his case.

How Mr. Smuts' appointment was regarded among his own people appears from an *Ons Land* article, which remarked that he could now gather the experience requisite to one aspiring to play a great part in politics. "The charge, so often levelled against the Republic, that no Cape Colonial need apply for a Government billet, is now proved to be without foundation. Let us be honest, and admit that Transvaal experience of Cape officials has frequently been the reverse of pleasant." The Transvaal Conservatives were not so loud in their praises, although *De Volkstem* was looked upon as their principal mouthpiece. It was felt that the step taken by the Government marked a new era in the country's political development; that the time of the grey-beards was fast being left behind, and that fresh ideas would find a lodgment amidst the traditions of Pretoria, now that an energetic Cape man, known as an apostle of the "Young South Africa" gospel, was in the seats of the mighty. In fact, something akin to consternation reigned among the old school of State officials and their friends. No one could tell what this austere-looking zealot with the monkish countenance was capable of. It would indeed form a splendid subject for a debating society, even at this late hour, to discuss the probable trend of events in the South African Republic, with Smuts once in the saddle, had there been no war. Mr. W. P. Schreiner, who was Sir Gordon Sprigg's successor as the Premier of Cape Colony, thought the occasion important enough for a tribute to Advocate Smuts, which he paid in the course of a speech at Malmesbury in July of that year.

Before six months had passed, the new State Attorney had made his influence felt in unmistakable fashion. There

were grave complaints on the Rand about the inefficiency, or worse, of the detective service. "Bob" Ferguson was the chief detective. Although he was looked upon as a capable man, the illicit liquor traffic and the trade in wrongfully acquired gold were flourishing. On the 15th of November 1898 it was announced that Ferguson had received his *congé*. "Smuts says I do not get at the big men," was his own explanation. On the day following, the Johannesburg *Standard and Diggers' News* was able to state Mr. Smuts' intention to have the whole of the detective service—until then managed by the Commissioner of Police at Pretoria—placed under the State Attorney. "It is a big task," the paper considered, "but that it is a wise movement we are convinced. No one doubts the integrity and ability of Mr. Smuts. . . . He has it in him to make the law respected." On the 17th of November the resolution desired by the pushful State Attorney was passed by the Volksraad, in spite of opposition. Only those who are acquainted with the influences at work in the Transvaal of those days can realize what obstacles had to be surmounted by the man of twenty-eight before he could carry a measure of this description, or the magnitude of the task he had set himself to accomplish. But, as Mr. Merriman had said shortly before at Stellenbosch: "Mr. Smuts, who has been playing a great part in South African affairs, has fulfilled the promise of being an ornament to the institution that trained him and of being a valuable citizen of South Africa." Any one who was selected by so shrewd a judge of men as Paul Kruger for one of the highest offices of State, after but one or two conversations, must have had special qualifications; yet, in spite of all the laws and all the different attempts at reorganization of the service, the illicit traffic has managed to survive until this very day. The need for political prosecutions, too, is always with us. This department of the young State Attorney's activities in 1898–9 was a constant source of anxiety, and called for the exercise of the greatest tact as well as ingenuity.

The Bills introduced into the Volksraad during Mr. Sm uts

tenure of office have given modern critics food for retrospective argument in favour of the theory that he is an unmitigated martinet. There can be no doubt that a few of those Bills were nothing less than draconic, but I do not know whether that was entirely his fault. After all, the State Attorney was there chiefly to carry out the wishes of the Executive Council (of which he was not a member), and to embody their instructions in statutes. Mr. Smuts made no public speeches in those days. When he spoke in the Volksraad it was usually by request, and in order to make clear some point of law. It is said that, in doing so, he showed great eagerness to support the President's policy. If so, it is safe to assume that the severe penalties imposed by his Bills were likewise introduced at the behest of the head of the State. This explanation is not made for the purpose of assigning to Mr. Smuts the part of the Admirable Crichton. He had the defects inseparable from great qualities: he has them now. Uneasy lay the head of the high Transvaal official in the period spoken of; if he wanted to keep it on his shoulders, as an official, at all, he sometimes had to countermine very vigorously, because his enemies never wearied of mining and sapping. A young man, showing so much of the reformer's zeal on the one hand, but propping up a Conservative *régime* on the other, was sure to call down a great deal of trouble on his own head, and Mr. Smuts obtained his full share. The principle of setting a thief to catch a thief is not unknown among us, in this part of the world; it is not surprising therefore that, in fighting the machinations of his enemies, he sometimes had occasion to employ instruments in the shape of men whom to ignore would have been more palatable. Yet, no serious charge could ever be successfully brought against his administration. The homage subsequently paid to it by friend and foe disproved to the full the insinuations, and even the definite accusations, published from time to time at Johannesburg by Ferguson and his friends.

In July 1899, when President Kruger met Sir Alfred

Milner at Bloemfontein, the Transvaal State Attorney, among others, accompanied him. It is said, but I cannot vouch for the truth of the statement, that England's representative did not deal gently with Smuts' youth—was, in fact, very short to him—and that the victim, touched on the quick, was extremely slow to forgive the High Commissioner. There is a tradition among Mr. Smuts' friends that the coldness and haughtiness displayed by Sir Alfred made the State Attorney declaim against certain characteristics attributed by him to the influence of life at English universities in general. The story is not improbable. We are an easy-going crowd in South Africa, and young Smuts, though much less lackadaisical than the average, was a child of the sun. The worship of "good form" in some of its narrower aspects, and especially when combined with superciliousness, can hardly have appealed to him. His country did not, nor does it now, socially ostracize because of undue prominence of the knife in the consumption of peas, any more than attach great importance to the correct pronunciation of "Hermione." It shows, in fact, a marked indifference to appearances. It is indulgent, always giving a man "another chance." It is impatient only with the "superior person."

The Bloemfontein *Friend*, then a friend of Sir Alfred's and not of the Transvaal's, completely misjudged Advocate Smuts at the time of the Conference. It made him belong to the war party. Now, it so happened that in 1899 I was, in the very humblest of capacities, connected with what commonly went by that name. It included, as the event proved, the great majority of the Transvaal Boers. Most of its adherents did not exactly want war, although they were disinclined—after what had happened—to go very much farther out of their way in an attempt to avoid it. They looked on Smuts as a dangerous opponent, considering him a peace-at-any-price man. This was an exaggeration, but the English newspapers of South Africa certainly did him a gross injustice in describing him as a Boer jingo. Like General Botha, General De la Rey and so many others, he did his best

to avert war, but fought hard to win when his pacific efforts were unsuccessful. Together with Mr. Piet Grobler (grandson of President Kruger, who was then Under-State-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and whose sentence for rebellion while he was a M.L.A. in 1915 is fresh in the public memory), he played an important part in the verbal negotiations with Mr. Conyngham Greene, British Agent at Pretoria. Harsh opinions were expressed by the "war party" about the alleged lack of dexterity with which these conversations were conducted on the Boer side. The chief complaint was to the effect that Smuts' very eagerness for peace led him to say and do things that made war inevitable. The critics were not quite consistent, because they had previously accused the British Government, or at any rate Sir Alfred Milner and Mr. Chamberlain, of forcing on a struggle. However that may be, the responsibility of pitting two young and inexperienced officials against a polished diplomat such as Mr. Greene cannot lie at the door of Messrs. Smuts and Grobler, but belongs to the Executive Councillors who had sent them. In any case, there can hardly be two opinions as to the desperate sincerity with which Advocate Smuts sought to soften the other side with concessions. The *Transvaal Leader*, one of the most virulent Uitlander papers of the day, did not hesitate to say, in September 1899, that "the State Attorney, with an insight and patriotic ambition entirely honourable and creditable, approached Mr. Greene with the desire of obtaining a *modus vivendi*."

A Transvaal Green Book had been published in which Smuts' version of the negotiations was given. There had been a misunderstanding. In his zeal to save his country from what he knew must be a terrible war, the State Attorney had represented to Mr. Greene the possibility of getting a few extra concessions (regarding the franchise, etc.) passed by the Volksraad. Mr. Greene had understood him to promise these things definitely on behalf of the Transvaal Government. No doubt there was perfect good faith on both sides, but on both sides, too, implications of

something very different were made when it appeared that the Government at Pretoria would not go quite so far as had been anticipated. Towards the end of August, the State Attorney addressed letters to "Dear Mr. Greene," couched in perfectly polite language, in order to make his position clear, but he was bitterly attacked by the greater part of the English South African Press for what was called his duplicity. The *Transvaal Leader*, however, as late as the 27th of September, when the burghers were being called out, recognized that Mr. Smuts had evidently meant well, and that the British Agent was acting in the same spirit and in the best faith when transmitting to Her Majesty's Government proposals that were unfortunately quite unauthorized.

On the 25th of August Mr. Smuts had been obliged to write: "The terms of a settlement as contained in the formal note of this Government dated the 19th of August were very carefully considered, and I do not believe there is the slightest chance that these terms will be altered or amplified. Your decision will therefore have to be arrived at on these terms as they stand." That was, as the language of diplomacy goes, a very frank avowal. For some time past, the Boer feeling had been that war was inevitable. It was a calamity from which, it has since been stated, good has come. Personally, I must say that my sympathies were with the Transvaal both before and during the struggle. It was a country with many faults, but it was a lovable country. The temptation now arises to indulge in rhetoric. But, after all, there is more than one standpoint from which the Boer War may be viewed. Also, it is wise to bow to the inevitable, and if this were not sufficient, I have to remember that this volume has nothing to do with the war, except in so far as it affected the subject of my character sketch. That it did affect him very powerfully cannot be denied, while he, on his part, exercised a considerable influence on its course.

V

PRETORIA TO VEREENIGING

Oom Paul, believing over-much,
Your faith in God and man was such
You dared to put it to the touch !

THUS commiserated the author of *Blind Children* at Mentone. And, indeed, the appeal made by the head of the South African Republic to his fellow-man was no ordinary one. If there was any one in the Transvaal foolish enough to believe that the defeat of the British Army would prove an easy task—just as there were people on the other side sufficiently conceited to look upon the late General Butler as a traitor, because he considered at least 100,000 men necessary to conquer the Boers—Advocate Smuts could not have been one of them. He, at any rate, knew something of the resources of the Empire ; if he threw himself heart and soul into the struggle, it was because a stern sense of duty inspired his actions. Almost as soon as war was declared, the Transvaal Government published an elaborate statement of the Boer case, entitled *A Century of Wrong*. The authorship of this work was for a long time attributed to Mr. F. W. Reitz, then State Secretary, now President of the Union Senate. It appeared afterwards, however, that Mr. Reitz had left most of the actual composition in the State Attorney's hands. Advocate Smuts was assisted by one or two others ; between them they certainly wielded their battle-axe in a fashion as incisive as might have been

expected of the champions of a young nation fighting for its independence.[1]

It will be within the recollection of most how even the British Empire was shaken and stirred by the Boer War. What, then, would be the effect on the feelings and passions of men who were prominent on the Boer side, considering what was at stake for them and what the odds were! *A Century of Wrong* contained some strong language, but there was not a man on the Boer side who did not consider every word of it justified at that particular moment, when brains no less than hearts were afire. General Smuts' enemies, not satisfied with casting such an outpouring of sentiment into his face sixteen years after the event, attempted to make him appear a double-distilled traitor to the Dutch cause, by insinuating that even in 1899 the State Attorney of the South African Republic had written the original in English, and that the volume, purporting to be the original, was really a translation into Dutch. As, however, the MS. of General Smuts' share in the work is still extant, I am able to state that the allega-

[1] The pungency of their phraseology was used, or abused, during the 1915 General Election, when an attempt was made to turn *Een Eeuw van Onrecht* into a boomerang. The ex-State Secretary's son in particular, who opposed General Smuts in Pretoria West, exploited the contrast between the 1899 volume and the General's 1915 utterances. He personally cross-examined his opponent at public meetings, asking him *inter alia* whether he considered that the statements made sixteen years before were correct. General Smuts, who not unnaturally became rather impatient after having been badgered for some time about a hoary and irrelevant matter, answered abruptly: "Ask your father!" The desire to make capital out of *A Century of Wrong* at a period when its author was doing his best to strengthen the fabric of which South Africa had become an integral part was about as logical as the one previously mentioned in connection with the Kimberley speech. Still, it was no doubt successful up to a certain point, because among the electorate one will always find a few groundlings who can be caught by such tactics. There are beings so constituted that they cannot understand that, when once a man has striven with all his might to do his duty in a given set of circumstances, he may afterwards be found in the company of those against whom, unsuccessfully, he battled, but with whom he has since publicly and frequently shaken hands.

tion is on a level with most of the others emanating from the same quarter—and that is not saying very much for its veracity. The intention in all these cases is, no doubt, strictly honourable, but it is a pity that on questions of fact critics are not invariably careful and painstaking.

A particular parade has been made of the peroration of *A Century of Wrong*, in which the author calls on all and sundry to assist in realizing the ideal of a United South Africa, under the Vierkleur. Be it noted, in passing, that this was not what the average Transvaal Boer was fighting for. He may have had an eye on Kosi Bay, or some such outlet to the sea, but he certainly was not in favour of adding to his troubles by annexing a large "Uitlander" population in the Cape and Natal. "The Vierkleur from the Cape to the Zambesi" was the slogan of the Young Afrikander movement of 1899, commonly considered to have centred, as far as Pretoria was concerned, in Mr. Advocate Ewald Esselen. This gentleman had at one time or another occupied half the public positions in South Africa worth coveting; he could have occupied the other half, had he cared to exercise his phenomenal gifts in that direction. Though known for his pan-African views, he took no active part in politics in the years immediately preceding the war, but he was a friend of Mr. Smuts. As far as can be gathered he was, to a large extent, his political mentor, thanks to his wider experience. It is evident, however, from the preceding chapters that the State Attorney himself held strong views as to the desirability of a unified South Africa long before he came to Pretoria. The Jameson Raid and its sequel had forced the impression upon him that a union of hearts was impracticable under the ægis of the Power that "guarded our coasts," but was unwilling to "leave us more and more to ourselves." What more natural than that he now thought the hour had struck for a realization of his ideal under the Flag with which he had identified himself? Let those who may find inconsistency in the circumstance that, at Vereenig ing, he was—as he himself has expressed it—persuaded

by the "logic of facts" that his former ambition could not be realized, and that, after all, the national unity he sought could only be looked for under the Union Jack. General de Wet, at Vereeniging, was at one with him on this point, for surely no one will do the old Free State champion the injustice to suppose that he was insincere when in his war book he wrote the injunction to his people to respect the new order of affairs and abide by it. It is a pity that, in this world, when we speak of the logic of facts, those "facts" are often of the hardness peculiar to the products of Essen, Creusot, and Elswick, but he is a sorry statesman who does not keep such circumstances in mind.

To cut a long argument short, General Smuts has often declared, since the grant of self-government to the Transvaal, that many mistakes had been made on both sides before 1899; that he had been a party to some of them; that one could do no better than profit by experience, and that, if South Africa was to get out of the old rut, it would have to proceed on entirely different lines, choosing mutual trust and forbearance instead of suspicion and dislike. Is not this as manly and straightforward a statement as can be made? Those who were willing to follow him on the strength of it, in order to rescue their people from the slough of despond in 1907 and onwards, had little cause to abuse him in the period 1912–16 for the reason that he had *meant* what he had said!

There was a great deal of organizing work to be done during the first few months of the struggle, both at Pretoria and with the burghers in the field. Questions of commissariat, internal government, international law, and many others connected with the state of war required attention. Mr. Smuts visited several battle fronts for the purpose of rendering active assistance in military affairs. Occasionally he was at his office in Pretoria in order to keep an eye on civil, or quasi-civil, business. Sometimes he took part in the journalistic propaganda, inseparable from modern warfare, though perhaps underrated by generals in the field.

The late Michael Davitt, whom I met at Pretoria at a highly interesting confabulation shortly after Lord Roberts' march into the Free State, had an interview with the State Attorney, an account of which appeared in *The Freeman*. Mr. Smuts was rightly indignant at the campaign of calumny waged against the Boers by a section of the Press. He particularly referred to the oft-repeated slander concerning their "cruelty to the natives," pointing out that operations in the field were considerably facilitated by the zeal with which the Kaffirs were helping to cultivate the farms. "Surely," he said, "this is the strongest proof that a people who can act in this manner under the present circumstances are not a race upon whom we trample. . . . They are actually assisting the Boers at a time when a native revolt would almost certainly have proved fatal to the Republics. . . . Compare this with what happened in Rhodesia when Dr. Jameson removed the police."

But the "logic of facts" was on the side of the big battalions. Early in June 1900 the capital of his adopted country was occupied. One would think that it required little imagination to understand the impression created by such an event on a patriot whose sensory nerves were unimpaired. There were men on the conquering side, however, who do not seem to have possessed that modicum of insight, judging from the manner in which they urged all Transvaalers of knowledge and education to give in. Contrary to what appears to be a fairly common belief even now, it was not alone the "ignorant, fanatical" part of the population that persisted in prolonging the struggle. At a time when a panic, such as comes to the best of armies at times, had seized many of the commandoes from the most conservative districts, the younger, and chiefly the progressive, Boers held out. There would have been nothing surprising in the spectacle of a college man, like Advocate Smuts, refusing to commit his fortunes to the veld in the rigorous days of guerilla warfare. But when Botha and so many others among the younger generation decided to carry out the Executive's orders by standing firm, Smuts was one

of those who proved that the Mauser might be more attractive than the manual of law. For one brief moment, he too may have almost given up hope, sanguine as is his temperament. Things looked very black when Pretoria had to be surrendered. It seemed as if the Dutch race in South Africa was to be completely overwhelmed, vanquished so thoroughly as to leave no footprints in the sands of time, in spite of the Great Trek, in spite of all its sufferings and its strivings. The moment of parting from what had become the centre of his ambitions, the seat of his most promising career, must have been exceedingly bitter to the man of thirty. At such times do men's hairs turn white, and the ordinary dictates of faith and reason become as gall and wormwood.

The remnant of the Boer Army occupied for a brief spell the heights of the Magaliesberg where, after taking a sweep in a south-easterly direction, it commences to merge into the High Veld. In the clear atmosphere of the Transvaal, the fifteen miles separating this position from Pretoria, as the crow flies, do not obscure the view. As Smuts was casting a farewell look back at the snug little town he had learned to love so well, a flood of sorrowful emotion must have rushed over him. But before long the battle that took its name from Diamond Hill proved that, though artillery and force of numbers might drive the Boer Army farther back, it had not lost its heroism nor yielded up its devotion. This must have given him fresh courage, for it showed that in any future South Africa his people were worthy to occupy as honourable and prominent a place as he had ever assigned to them in his thoughts and utterances. They rose superior to the demoralization that had followed the surrender of Cronjé, the relief of Ladysmith, and the occupation of the capitals of the Republics. The Transvaal *capital* had very nearly fallen into the hands of the British in more senses than one. The so-called "Kruger millions" were only removed from Pretoria at the eleventh hour. It is characteristic of the State Attorney's energy and organizing powers that he supervised the transport from the

bank vaults to the miniature railway train that took them away, at a moment when everything in Pretoria was upside down. Even the trolley on which the gold was shifted to the station was commandeered in haphazard fashion, and the escort was a scratch one. A good deal of the actual work was done by other hands, but it was Mr. Smuts who kept his head sufficiently to see that the necessary orders were given for the contents of the treasury to reach its proper custodians, and in the nick of time.

The position was that the members of the Government had left Pretoria before the Commandant-General—who was doing his best to stem the tide of Lord Roberts' advance—could take over the town. It was resolved to leave General Burger and the State Attorney in charge, but this resolution was never embodied in a formal document. Small bodies of burghers and volunteers, first under Generals Lukas Meyer and Smuts, then under General Botha himself, did what they could in order to prevent Pretoria from falling into the hands of the British prematurely. Sorties were made, and there was a show of resistance, but it was impossible to maintain this in good earnest. When the moment of enforced surrender drew near, General Smuts asked the National Bank to be so kind as to disgorge the State's assets in the shape of coin and bullion. As he had no legal authority to demand a penny, however, he was met with a polite refusal. Negotiations followed, and these looked like becoming interminable, when the British advance-guard was very close to the town. It was a position in which—as General Smuts expressed it during the deportation debate of 1914—the weak man would fail. The State Attorney, not being a weak man, took matters into his own hands. He plainly intimated to the responsible bankers that the time for formalities had gone by, and that, unless his demands were complied with, he would use force. This had the effect of producing demureness where there had been demur.

The State treasure, amounting to approximately £500,000, was handed over without further ado. It was high time, for Lord Roberts' howitzers were hard at work, attempting

to wreck the railway-line along which the train containing the gold had to travel. Chaos reigned in Pretoria, notwithstanding (or perhaps on account of) its many masters, authority being divided between the Government representatives and a self-constituted Committee of Peace and Order. It was as well that at least a few determined men were to be found to bridge the interregnum, maintain a semblance of order, and rescue assets of value from a mob that had begun to pay them considerable attention.

When the Government of the Republic could no longer depend on even the unimposing accommodation afforded by a railway saloon, Mr. Smuts found his way to the Western Transvaal, where a good deal of the fighting was to be carried on. He obtained a command under General De la Rey—one of the few really great strategists the war produced—and fought in many an action round about Ventersdorp, Potchefstroom, and the south-western Rand. Wary as De la Rey was, on one occasion the British very nearly had him surrounded. General Smuts, who shone as a tactician, insisted on movements that were afterwards proved to have been necessary in order to break through the cordon. He was fond of the traditional Boer policy of executing feints, in order to concentrate the main body of his forces at a spot where there was promise of success. Owing to a native's treachery, the troops one night took his camp by surprise, and in absolute silence. Most of his men got away, but, incredible though it may seem, he himself was left sleeping the sleep of exhaustion among some bushes in the Gatsrand range of hills. When he awoke, it was some time before he could believe the evidence of his eyes, which persisted in telling him that he was completely surrounded by khaki! He no sooner realized his predicament than he began to devise means for getting away, in which he succeeded before many minutes had passed. In the darkness, outside the camp, he stumbled on his brother-in-law, Mr. P. S. Krige—who is now his secretary—and the two made good their escape, joining the rest of their scattered commando further away.

In the course of 1901 he was appointed Acting Assistant Commandant-General. In January of the same year Mrs. Smuts had been sent from Pretoria to Maritzburg, where she was allowed to occupy a house, instead of going into a concentration camp. They only met once, from the occupation of Pretoria until the declaration of peace. It was at Standerton, when the Boer generals were allowed to confer and to communicate with President Kruger in Europe.

There was, about that time, a large concentration of British troops in the Central Transvaal, where Boer attacks were not fruitful. General Smuts, thinking that he could do the cause more good by multiplying trouble for Lord Kitchener in the Cape, obtained permission to go there. Needless to say, this proved no small undertaking, but he managed to slip through without attracting overmuch attention until the neighbourhood of the Orange River, in the south-eastern part of the Free State, was reached. Here the pressure became severe. He managed to cross the river, and then began a remarkable march through the Cape Midlands, in the course of which he often had to double and double again. It must be left to his biographer to describe in detail the route he took as well as the effect of his movements on military operations generally. There can be no doubt that his action, concerted as it was with that of other highly mobile columns, contributed in no small degree to the difficulties of the British commanders, the insecurity of Lord Kitchener's lines of communication, and the general condition of doubt and uncertainty created in the Cape by the remarkable rapidity and boldness of the Boer movements. Near Tarkastad he rushed a position held by the 17th Lancers, on whom he inflicted severe losses. On the other hand, he himself sometimes got into difficulties. In spite of remonstrances from his inferiors, he usually insisted on accompanying his scouts, or even walked up hilltops on solitary reconnoitring expeditions. In September 1901 he was, with a small body of his men, occupied in spying

out the land. Against his own better judgment he was prevailed upon to attempt the passage of a narrow defile. The English had prepared a trap ; they held their fire until the Boers were within a few dozen yards. All of the latter were hit, with the exception of General Smuts himself, but his horse was shot under him. I am not aware whether he himself can fully explain how he managed to escape at all, but escape he did, by alternately lying low, jumping up, and running as fast as his legs would carry him. With the English forces was an officer named Hughes, who, strangely enough, was in command of a search party that examined Mr. Smuts' house when Pretoria was occupied. Still more strangely, the same gentleman, who had meanwhile become Colonel Hughes, was one of the two staff officers who saw General Smuts off on the little platform at Irene when he boarded the special train that took him and his staff to East Africa, early in 1916.

Not far from the scene of his narrow escape, General Smuts had another, though in different circumstances. He and his men had been living on a meat diet for some considerable time. They say that it does not always rain in Glasgow : sometimes it snows. In like manner, the meat was not always mutton ! For many days the Smuts commando had to be satisfied with the flesh of mountain tortoises, which are fairly abundant in the northern hills of Cape Colony. It is a food of which one soon wearies, especially when it is unaccompanied by salt. He and his men were craving for an edible vegetable substance of some sort, when one of their number discovered some " Hottentot's bread," which they thought wholesome. General Smuts ate a fairly large quantity, only to find before many hours were over that this " food " caused excruciating pains. He and some others fell severely ill, and to complete their plight, the English were soon after discovered to be moving in their direction. So as to give his men an opportunity of getting safely away, he asked them to leave him behind. They, however, would not hear of it, and contrived to carry him along with them until he was well enough to look after himself once more.

Colonels (now Generals) Lukin and Gorringe frequently chased General Smuts' column. Now he was here, now there. The newspapers would tell their readers that "Smuts was being pressed by our forces in the Sneeuwberg," and immediately afterwards you would hear of him near Graaff-Reinet or Prince Albert. "Smuts is being headed north," was the news one day; the next you were told that he was going south at Somerset East. The *Natal Witness* of the 15th of November 1901 mentioned that he had marched "the surprisingly long distance of more than 700 miles in the space of five weeks." The European reader may have to be reminded of the fact that a considerable portion of the country in which this Odyssey was performed is almost waterless. But it was as a Garden of Eden compared with the territory in which he operated a little later: the dread North-West. There the number of British troops opposed to him was small, but Nature was an enemy not to be despised. Smuts and his lieutenants (among whom, for some time, was the now notorious Maritz) made raids right and left, keeping a large area in turmoil. Commandant J. L. van Deventer—not "Van de Venter," as he is often called—who carried out a great deal of the work in the North-West districts of the Cape, is again fighting under General Smuts, this time in East Africa (1916).

It is in consonance with General Smuts' love for orderliness and law that his officers and men had strict instructions how to act in all sorts of contingencies, although such details were left by some guerilla leaders to the whim of their subordinates. These enjoined, *inter alia*, the proper treatment of all prisoners of war and non-combatants. Spies had to be tried by a legally constituted court-martial. A sentence of death required confirmation before it could be carried out. In issuing these orders he struck the golden mean between the actions of some of his fellow-generals, who were inclined to be over-indulgent towards spies, and the excessive zeal of others who allowed natives suspected of spying to be shot without much formality. Speaking generally, the Boers were the reverse of harsh in

punishing military offences, and this undoubtedly was to their own disadvantage, particularly in the early stages of the war.

While in the desert-like districts of Cape Colony, General Smuts conducted an active correspondence with the Boer Government in Europe as well as with other Boer detachments; he was for ever instilling energy as well as confidence into the Republicans. In January 1902 and at other periods he forwarded to President Kruger reports that had reached him on what he considered gross breaches of the rules of warfare by British commanders.[1]

By some of the worse informed, vituperative newspapers of the period, General Smuts' conduct during the siege of O'okiep, that curious little mining town, has been condemned in unmeasured terms. He was supposed to have ruthlessly shelled a non-combatant population. These idle tales are completely disproved by the correspondence that passed between him and Colonel Shelton, who commanded the beleaguered metropolis of Namaqualand. General Smuts began by addressing to his enemy a polite note, advising him to send the civilians out of O'okiep. Colonel Shelton dispatched a formal typewritten answer, communicating the fact that he had submitted the Boer warning to a

[1] Some of these were published in Europe, to be reprinted by "chivalrous" political opponents fourteen years after. The intention was to prejudice the British electorate in South Africa against General Smuts because he had, at the time, done his plain duty by forwarding these reports in 1902. They were concerned chiefly with an anti-Boer Press campaign (which was indeed an unblushing one), the treatment meted out to some of the women and children, and the arming of natives against the Boers. In one of General Smuts' reports to his chiefs he made honourable mention of Commander van Deventer's great services. This is worth recording, because of the accusation sometimes made that he was not above appropriating the reputation properly due to subordinates. This accusation is completely refuted by the fact that an exceptionally large number of officers and others were mentioned by General Smuts in dispatches concerning the East African Expedition, 1916. At the conclusion of the German South-West Africa campaign, too, he published a General Order full of generosity towards the officers and men who had taken part in it.

meeting of those concerned. They had decided, however, that rather than go into a separate camp they would stay in the town. General Smuts then pointed out that the responsibility was the commander's, whereupon he received a reply, dated the 11th of April 1902, containing the following sentence, among others : "I fully appreciate your humane consideration, and beg to thank you for the kindly offer you have made me."

O'okiep held out well. General Smuts was still busy with it when he received an urgent summons to attend the peace conference to be held at Vereeniging, accompanied by a free conduct, signed "D. Haig, Colonel." Perhaps Sir Douglas remembers this incident.

At Vereeniging, the voice of Smuts was one of those crying for peace. Many of the Boer officers were in favour of continuing the war, and on both sides stirring speeches were made. The principal contents of General Smuts' oration have been preserved; it is worth reading, but too long for insertion here. He pointed out a fact that was overlooked by several of his fellow-officers, viz. that in deciding as to the continuance of military operations they had to keep other than purely military considerations in view. It was fairly easy, he admitted, for several of the commandoes to hold their ground, but that should be only a means to an end. The end itself was a national one. Now, he asked, were they serving the cause of the Boer people by continuing to display their physical courage and endurance? Was there any good purpose in making further sacrifices? Was it not rather an occasion for screwing up their moral courage in order to take a step that, to be sure, was highly distasteful to all of them? The world-wide sympathy evoked by the Boer resistance had been spoken of. "Sympathy," aye, but sympathy won no wars, and intervention had proved a will-o'-the-wisp. In eloquent terms he impressed on his hearers the desirability of putting an end to the terrible condition into which the country was drifting. The greater part of the Republics' surface had been left desolate by the demands

made on it by friend and foe. Women and children were languishing in concentration camps. The flower of the nation was being killed off in the field. Whither was it all leading? Was it not far better to call a halt, and to obtain from the invader such terms of peace as would enable the Boers to build up their nation anew?

Arguments such as these carried the day. With heavy hearts the majority decided to renounce independence. The officers returned to the districts in which commandoes had been operating. Peace was declared. In the towns, the pealing of joyous bells and the brilliance of bunting. In the veld, a sense of relief, it is true, but with it bitter suffering. The Boer nation was in mourning for what had been lost: lives and independence both. It was not, in every instance, an easy task to persuade the men to lay down their rifles and surrender their horses. Apart from the national sentiment involved, there is the Boer's love for the twain that are his companions from boyhood. General Smuts addressed an affecting and affectionate letter to his commando, in which he asked them to face the future with confidence, based on an honourable past. He adjured his men not to say or do anything that might wound the feelings of others, and promised his late comrades all the support he might be able to give.

The curtain had been rung down. But there remained several of the principal actors in a drama that was certainly a stirring one, overshadowed as it was destined to be by several bloody wars in the not distant future. The existence the Boer generals had led could not fail to leave its permanent mark on them, physically as well as mentally. A citizen army carries various military qualities back with it into civil life. How, for instance, could a man plunge into the billowy veld as an advocate, and come out, his fibre unchanged, a general of two years' standing? Subsequent political developments in South Africa must have been far different had such men as Generals Botha, De Wet, De la Rey, Smuts, and Hertzog succeeded to great political power in the ordinary course of events, without the added prestige

of martial prowess. The physical changes alone wrought in General Smuts were remarkable enough. Gone was the pallor of his face, gone also the thinness of his frame. His skin was now clear with the ruddy glow of health. The ascetic cast of his features had been diminished by a considerable growth of flaxen beard. He had gained remarkably, not only in flesh, but in chest measurement. His expression had changed from one of constant brooding until it bespoke alertness and vigour. The breezes of the veld were in his smile ; its vast spaces in the sweep of his arm ; its strength and unrelenting spirit in the springiness of his rapid gait. To say that a chapter in his career had closed would be an under-statement. Here stood a different man, one who had been largely a student and a recluse, but who had now faced the perils and the realities of life ; who had become more than ever racy of the soil ; who had known what it was to come into conflict not only with the enemy, but with his companions in oppression ; who had been hunter and hunted by turns ; who had gone through raging fires and had come out tempered steel. When he and Mr. P. S. Krige presented themselves before their parents in the Cape, they saw to their astonishment that they were not recognized ! Taking advantage of this for a moment, they gave fictitious names, stating that they had come with news about Jan Smuts. And when, eventually, they gave up their disguise, it required the recital of some unmistakable facts and a close personal inspection before they were finally accepted as themselves.

GENERAL SMUTS AND MR. P. S. KRIGE, JULY 1902.

VI

VEREENIGING TO LONDON

ON the 8th of January 1903 a solemn spectacle was witnessed at Pretoria. Mr. Chamberlain had come to take stock of the position. The Union Jack waved over us. At a banquet held in Pretoria, Mr. M. R. Greenlees complained in the presence of the Secretary of State, the Governor, and the Lieutenant-Governor, that our Crown Colony administration gave the Transvaal "too little Colony and too much Crown." If the British population felt this, it is not surprising that the Boers should have approached Mr. Chamberlain's triumphal car with a few requests. A monster deputation, representing the Dutch inhabitants, obtained a hearing in the Assembly Hall of the old Volksraad. Lord Milner and Sir Arthur Lawley supported the Minister. Generals Botha, Burger, Smuts, De la Rey, De Wet and many other prominent men were there on behalf of the older population, with General Smuts as their spokesman.

The Boers had no organization, hardly coherence, at the time. It was doubtful who was to speak for them in the future. The selection of General Smuts on this important occasion showed the trust that was reposed both in his capacity and in his sentiment. In the Republic he had been an important official—not a political leader. Immediately after the conclusion of peace, General Botha and he had made it their business to inaugurate the work of the regeneration of their sorely tried people. There were

others, but these two constituted as it were an informal though efficient executive body to look after matters that cropped up almost every day. In the light of subsequent events, this action may appear to have been a matter of course. At the time, it was a very different matter. The Boer leaders, almost without exception, emerged from the heroic struggle as poor men. Politically, they were being treated as pariahs by the towns. After three years' intense military work and racking anxiety, many of them felt that they needed a rest, coupled with the opportunity of retrieving their shattered private fortunes. Public work was far from tempting to any one of them. It was at this stage, when enervation and discouragement prevailed, that General Smuts kept a stiff upper-lip, assuming a watching brief so that the case against his "ain folk" should not go by default.

He had resumed practice as an advocate at Pretoria. His intimate knowledge of Transvaal conditions, his reputation as a sound lawyer, his gifts as a pleader, ensured him a lucrative professional career at the outset. But this involved a great deal of exacting work, and it will always stand to his credit that, with many demands on his time, he found constant opportunities for the drafting of documents and the performance of services of a like nature to the amorphous remnant of the Boer people. His attitude at this critical, heart-searching period was in marked contrast to that of several noted Dutchmen, who had not shared the dangers of the war, whose worldly wealth had increased, but who omitted to render financial and other assistance when the need arose. Their laches at this juncture did not prevent those men from claiming the rank of leaders when fair-weather conditions had been re-established, thanks to the unremitting labour of Generals Botha and Smuts and their associates. Quietly, unobtrusively, the latter carried out their task of reconstruction. Silently they acted as buffers between authority and the spirit of the veld. But they did not stop there. When the Johannesburg chiefs of the mining houses fell in with Mr. Chamberlain's

demand that a war tax of £30,000,000 should be paid by the country, it was the Boer leaders' protest that saved the Transvaal from the imposition of that heavy burden.

The new Government was necessarily a somewhat rigid one. A vast amount of tact and *savoir faire* was required to meet both sides alternately and avoid friction. Fortunately the two leaders possessed these qualities, as well as several others that might be considered essential if they were to bring their work to a successful issue. The cordiality and constancy of their co-operation from that day until this need no comment; these have become, at any rate in South Africa, proverbial. Whenever, from now onwards, political action on the part of General Smuts is mentioned, it may be tacitly understood that General Botha is a partner; this will save frequent reiteration of a well-known fact. The two men must have realized that they were indispensable to each other in the new order of things. The individuality of one or other of them had to be sunk at times if great objects were to be attained. Had General Smuts been as monstrously self-willed as he is sometimes depicted, double harness would have been literally intolerable to him. The fact that these two personalities, known as they are to differ in many respects, have yet fitted each other like hand and glove all these years, illustrates General Smuts' character most clearly.

The proceedings in the Raadzaal were lengthy; only a very short summary can be given here. General Smuts first presented a petition, and then spoke to Mr. Chamberlain through an interpreter. "It is said," he observed, "that we do not wish to co-operate. That is not so. We thank Mr. Chamberlain heartily for coming over and learning at first hand what our troubles are. Our interests are so firmly bound up with the country that we cannot stand aside. We *must* work together for the country's good. It is, however, our desire that this co-operation should rest on a proper basis—that of confidence and respect. Mutual disrespect has been the curse of South Africa."

He then referred to the point in the address dealing with the treatment of Cape rebels by the British Government. This was, he emphasized, with the Republicans a question of honour: "We would not wish to minimize the crime of those people, but we say the crime is ours!" It is instructive to recall this passage, partly because the two generals have in later years been accused of having completely neglected the cause of those British subjects who had assisted them at the double peril of their lives; partly also on account of the capital made out of the old Cape position by rebels and rebel sympathizers of our own day against the Botha-Smuts attitude towards the insurgents of 1914. In the one sentence quoted here lies the justification of General Smuts' action at both periods. He could maintain, in 1914, that rebellion was a crime. In 1901–2 he had instigated it, because his duty to the Republics lay that way. In 1914 he punished it, because his duty to the State once more compelled him to do so. In 1903 he showed that he wished the past to be wiped out. He assumed responsibility for a political misdemeanour, and his first words were of co-operation and mutual respect.

His loyalty to the Flag he accepted at Vereeniging has lately been cast in his face as a sarcastic reproach. Mark his words to Mr. Chamberlain, and judge of the sincerity of those who now reproach him: "In conclusion, I only wish to touch on one point... It is frequently stated in the newspapers against us Boers that we are not loyal. We say to that that our entire conduct since the day when peace was signed clearly proves the contrary. . . . The Boers wish to stand by the Government. . . . A profound characteristic of the Boer is his loyalty to authority—not the loyalty which calls out from the housetops, or the loyalty *that pays*, but the loyalty that is TRUE TILL DEATH. We now come to our new Government and offer them that loyalty, but we ask them again to think what we have been—that we have been a free people, that we have been the freest people on earth. . . ."

Mr. Chamberlain answered; there was little further

discussion: General Botha made a speech; and General Smuts courteously thanked the Colonial Secretary for the sympathetic hearing.

Alas, Lord Milner does not appear to have been quite convinced either of the Boers' loyalty or of their love of freedom, for General Smuts' virile plea went very largely unheeded. Nor was the Administration successful in satisfying completely the other section of the population, the section whose complaint it was that "loyalty did not pay"—hence, General Smuts' reference. The demonstration, silent and dignified, of so many Boers filing into the historic building, was looked upon by many as a covert threat, though they came in broadcloth and not in gaiters. Their leaders gained in prestige. Perhaps for that very reason they, and especially the chief spokesman, henceforth stood imprinted on many a nervous observer's retina as machiavellian michief-makers. There were shrewder judges, too. The *Manchester Guardian* of the 12th of January 1903 said: "The Boer case was presented by Mr. Smuts with a clearness and conciseness that justify a hope that he may yet have a distinguished political career in the Transvaal under the English Crown." As an instance of another state of mind may be quoted an article that appeared in the *Rand Daily Mail* (Johannesburg) of the 14th of February 1903. Lord Milner had offered Generals Botha, De la Rey, and Smuts seats on the nominated Legislative Council. They refused. Superficially considered, and without an examination of all the attendant facts, this action was of course liable to misconstruction. The *Mail* was not slow in misconstruing it, as follows: ". . . If they had been honest enough to say that they declined the honour, the great honour, offered to them because they had no intention of associating their names and persons with British institutions, we could have believed them. In the circumstances, however, we must decline to do so, and take it that all the fair words which they have uttered about loyalty and co-operation are so many barren ex-

pressions." The writer further commented on "the characteristic jesuitry of Mr. Smuts," proceeding to ask, "Who is Mr. Smuts? He is one of the five men who were chiefly responsible for the war, a man of intensely bitter feelings, a type of Afrilander who—with the more pronounced Hollander—used every effort to keep the races apart."

These few lines from a leading article in one of the principal organs of Transvaal public opinion are quoted as a fair sample of the nonsense that was then printed almost daily, bearing upon the relation of the races in those years of darkness. It is unnecessary to comment on them, but one might well ask who the writer of this balderdash was. Presumably he is neither so honoured nor yet so prominent a figure on the South African stage of to-day as is the man whose character he endeavoured to blacken. It may even be doubted whether he is still in South Africa. The Dutch Press, too, was not invariably tactful in those days. But what are we to think of the *Rand Daily Mail's* statement that it was "at an utter loss to conceive why Mr. Smuts had been offered the honour at all. Happily his own excellent taste has expelled him from within the pale of an Assembly which, it is needless to say, would not have gained any special honour through the connection."

As for the Boer leaders themselves, they adopted a different tone. In writing to Lord Milner, on the 6th of February 1903—it is not difficult to recognize the fine Roman hand—they said: ". . . We recognize that the time has not yet come for popular representative institutions. . . . We doubt whether the time has come for even a nominated legislature. A legislature of a nominated type means public discussion of many of the topics on which public feeling is still in an unhealthy state of irritability. . . ." On the 9th of February Lord Milner replied that the Government was alive to the considerations so forcibly urged in favour of postponing the enlargement of the then existing Council. "For my own part, I share

your anxiety to a very great extent," he admitted, adding that there were counterbalancing advantages. ". . . My hopes in this respect are greatly strengthened by the tone and spirit of your letter and by your desire to promote the gradual growth of better relations between different sections of the community."

There was a small conference, but the end was a polite refusal on the part of the Generals, and an equally polite note by Lord Milner, relinquishing further efforts at persuasion. General Smuts showed that he bore the *Rand Daily Mail* no ill-will for its slighting words, for he granted its representative an interview on the 13th of February, when he spoke appreciatively of the Administration, adding: "We have fought and lost. Now we have to settle down. Let us have quiet and rest." He preferred that the Government should continue to do the work and bear the responsibility. The *Transvaal Leader* of the 16th of February was complimentary (!) enough to state: "We should regard Mr. Smuts' approval with intense disfavour, just as we refuse to believe that his action —the action of the son of a pronounced Bondsman—is unconnected with the secret propaganda of the Bond in this Colony." One can hardly read such extracts to-day without a smile. At the time, it was not a laughing matter. The issues were too important for that. The seed of distrust was destined to bear superabundant fruit, but the *Transvaal Leader* is no more.

General Smuts afterwards explained that Lord Milner refused to concede a reasonable period of time, asked for by the Generals in order to enable them to consult their people, on whose minds a curious impression might have been made, had they accepted blindfold. Viewed in the perspective that history alone can give, their action must be approved. With about one-tenth the voting strength, what could the three men have accomplished in an Assembly as the representatives of one-half the population? What would have been the ratio of their moral responsibility for the acts of a bureaucratic Administra-

tion to the amount of their power? As it was, they showed clearly that they had no desire to fish in troubled waters, preferring to give the new masters an opportunity of "dreeing their ain weird."

Their decision absolved General Smuts in particular from the charge of being unable to resist the promptings of an overweening ambition to have his finger in every pie of State. He mixed but little in public affairs during the twelve months following, devoting his attention to the physical and moral regeneration of his own race, which stood in such dire need of guidance. It was but fitting, therefore, that Sir A. Lawley should write to him in May 1903 when questions regarding assistance to the widows and orphans of those who had fallen in the war cropped up. The end of a period of political inactivity came with Lord Milner's ill-starred Chinese policy. In February 1904 Generals Burger, Botha, and Smuts asked Sir A. Lawley to forward to Mr. Lyttelton a protest against the importation of Asiatic coolies. This subjected them to renewed violent attacks by practically all the English newspapers in the country. The *Pretoria News* of the 13th of February referred to "the tardy protest of the *soi-disant* leaders of the Boer people" and to the "arrogant assumption on the part of Mr. L. Botha, Mr. Smuts, and others that they are entitled to speak for the Boers in this Colony." It will be noticed that it belonged to the *bon ton* (if I may follow the *News* in airing some French) of the period to "mister" Generals Botha and Smuts. As in the United States after the Civil War, every other nincompoop one met in the Transvaal of those days was a captain or a colonel, but the policy of pin-pricks pursued by a certain section towards the conquered included the consistent ignoring of military titles earned on the Boer side. Subsequent developments have supplied a curious commentary on the sneers concerning the political status of the "*soi-disant* leaders," as well as on the wisdom of the refusal to recognize their standing as military men. At the time, however, it was tantamount to sacrilege to doubt the Yellow Policy's power of salvation, and those who

ventured did so at their peril. A rumour mentioned by the *Rand Daily Mail* correspondent at Pretoria on the 29th of February, about the arrest of Botha and Smuts "in connection with the concealment of arms or some other alleged treasonable act," consequently gained general credence before it was proved to have just as much foundation as the average rumour can boast.

A few incidents such as these are mentioned here in order to show, since public memory is notoriously short, that General Smuts, together with his colleagues, was subjected to a great amount of provocation in those trying days. It will assist towards a better understanding of his character to have this made clear, especially since he rarely succumbed to the temptation of losing his temper or swerving from the path he had marked out for himself. At one time, indeed, the police unearthed a so-called Boer plot in the Lydenburg district; it was generally felt that an attempt had been made by some one to compromise the reputation for loyalty that was being sought by the leaders, whose innocence soon became apparent. In all that period of stress and irritation there is only one instance of impatience and hasty judgment that could be quoted against General Smuts, and even that is connected with the publication of a document never meant for the general gaze.

In March 1904 a letter written by General Smuts was forwarded to the *Daily News* by Miss Hobhouse, who had done such excellent work for the Boer women and children. In a covering note she explained that "the letter was not written with a view to publication," but that she felt convinced that the writer would not object. The following quotations from a fairly extensive epistle will convey its tenor: ". . . I saw in a cable that Lord Milner had represented the majority of the Boers as in favour of Chinese or, at any rate, as quite apathetic. That a large proportion of the Boers are apathetic is no doubt true, but these are the people who have lost all hope and heart, who are prepared to see this Government do anything in the Transvaal, who see that the course of the

Administration is, in spite of all warnings and remonstrances, directed towards ruin and disaster. . . . Beneath this apathy there burns in the Boer mind a fierce indignation against this sacrilege of Chinese importation—this spoliation of the heritage for which generations of the people have sacrificed their all. Often, when I think of what is happening now all over South Africa, my mind stands still, for the folly, the criminality of it all is simply inconceivable. . . . I sometimes ask myself whether South Africa will ever rise again, whether English statesmen will ever dare to be liberal and generous in South Africa. . . . You must not blame me too much for sitting still and doing nothing. There is a strong desire in me, and in us all, to do something, but what? There seems to be nothing in common between our ideas of public policy and those of the authorities. We think that government must be for the greatest good of the greatest number. They think that the mining industry must be saved at all costs. . . . And if there is nothing in common, how can you help them with advice and otherwise? Hence, I prefer to sit still, to water my orange-trees and to study Kant's *Critical Philosophy* until, in the whirligig of time, new openings for doing good offer themselves. . . . This is a very depressing letter. But it faithfully reflects the gloom of dull despair which is more and more enveloping us all."

There was more in the same strain, and some of it very very strong. One of the phrases that have stuck in the public memory of South Africa was to the effect that the country was "spinning along merrily to perdition." That and the saying about the orange-trees-cum-*Kritik-der-Reinen-Vernunft* were frequently caricatured at the time. "O. S." was inspired by the Hobhouse letter to contribute a satirical poem on the subject of Jannie Smuts to *Punch*. There is no gainsaying the fact that, from a coldly critical opponent's point of view, the letter deserved some of the unkind things that were said about it. General Smuts is by nature an almost incorrigible optimist. The letter reached the blackest depth of atrabiliousness. General

Smuts rarely indulges in hyperbole. On this occasion his sense of the picturesque and the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed led him to borrow some of the darker shades from Dante's palette. It is perfectly true that his words faithfully reflected the gloom prevailing in Boer political circles. It is equally true that he allowed his feeling of depression to disturb his generally correct sense of perspective. His generalizations, particularly those concerning the mining industry, were somewhat rash. They were largely justified by subsequent revelations, but to some extent had the defects inseparable from sweeping statements.

In judging this letter, one must not forget that a talented word-painter may allow himself considerable latitude when composing an impressionist canvas, meant for a friend's private collection only. It would be unfair to apply to such a subjective work of art the severely classical criterion that may reasonably be adopted in connection with a more responsible production. In the second place, it would have been almost superhuman if one of General Smuts' energy, whose ambitions and actions were systematically misrepresented by the organs supporting the Administration, had not chafed at political idleness enforced by the conditions prevailing around him. Thirdly, something sharp and sudden was required in order to bring home to the public at large the dissatisfaction with the Administration's policy. This is not the place to discuss fully the extent to which that dissatisfaction was justified. No doubt Lord Milner failed to receive credit for good intentions, and even for some of the good work he actually accomplished. It may be stated in all fairness that he did not suit South Africa, and that South Africa did not suit him. In any case, he was held very largely responsible for the war policy, and it was perhaps too much to expect of human nature to suppose that, with a deep-rooted dislike and distrust, the Boers could do justice to his motives, any more than that he could estimate theirs at their true value. Judicial posterity will have to concede that,

although the introduction of the Chinese and other measures showed him to be extremely partial to the mining industry, subsequent Administrations have found it advisable to mete out to the mines more sympathetic treatment than may originally have been intended. But all this was not known in 1904. Lord Milner's supporters urge, too, that he never received sufficient credit for the circumstance that, as soon as the concentration camps were taken over from the military, their condition rapidly improved. However this may be, the fact remains that the atmosphere was highly charged at the period of the Hobhouse letter. In forming an impression of the character of the man who wrote it, one may not leave the feeling of the period out of account. The letter caused a large amount of unfavourable comment at the time, but the outstanding facts have been summarized here.

On the 23rd of May 1904 a Congress was held at the Volkstem Buildings, Pretoria, that was destined to have a potent influence on South Africa's future political development. The time had come for definite organization, and *Het Volk* (*The People*) was founded by resolution of those present. It is amusing, even after the lapse of time, to contrast an article in the *Pretoria News* on the subject of this Congress with one quoted before. The extremist organ now said: "Although it is the fashion to look in some quarters upon Messrs. Botha, De la Rey, Smuts, and others of the more prominent of our late opponents as self-styled leaders of their people, yet there is no question of the fact that the people whom they represent, or speak for, as the case may be, tacitly and in effect acknowledge their leadership. . . . The Congress . . . furnishes practical and convincing proof that the Boer leaders do possess the confidence of the majority of their compatriots in this Colony. . . ."

This admission by the man on the spot was a step in advance. It was hardly possible any longer to represent General Smuts as an adventurer seeking to impose himself on the community on the false pretext that his opinions

were those of the men for whom he claimed to speak. He was not afraid to venture into the lion's den, for we find him delivering post-prandial orations in Johannesburg shortly afterwards. In September he advocated, at a Rand Pioneer function, "free speech and open criticism. He found nowadays a curious apologetic air pervading the whole community." This demand was not a mere platitude. One of Lord Milner's first steps after the war had been the passing of a Peace Preservation Ordinance, giving wide powers in the suppression of "undesirable" opinion and action. And the full weight of the Johannesburg purse and influence was at that time being exercised in order to muzzle the public with regard to Chinese labour. There was another and a larger question to which General Smuts referred. What was called "representative," as opposed to responsible, government was in the air, and he plainly said that he would have none of it, as it was unsuitable for the Transvaal.

In November of the same year he was given the toast of "The land we live in" at a Caledonian dinner. He made this the occasion for some straight talking in favour of what has since become known as South Africanism. At the time it was hardly able to exist in the Johannesburg atmosphere, still laden with the fumes of war and redolent of Lord Milner's "carnival of extravagance." General Smuts pointedly remarked that, to the Afrikander, this was not the land he *lived in*, nor was it the land he lived *upon*. It was his own land, and it was the propaganda of Afrikanderism in this country to work and work on, until every man in South Africa, from whatever part of the world he came, from whatever nationality he sprang, should call South Africa *his* land.

The speaker's breadth of view, and his implied reputation of an anti-foreigner policy, may be briefly contrasted here with the opposite creed, preached and practised by many of his countrymen, who wish to keep South Africa for the "true Afrikander" by warding off immigration and by the adoption of a restrictive policy generally.

A highly interesting political struggle for supremacy was in its opening stages when the speech was made, but it would take up too much space if details were supplied here. In January 1905 General Smuts left for a holiday in the Cape. He told a journalist that he was "going to devote his leisure to such vigorous exercise as mountain climbing." He would also spend some time fishing, "a pastime productive of calm contemplation." I do not know whether he carried out this intention, but am bound to say that he does not enjoy the reputation of being an ardent disciple of Izaak Walton. Rather do people suspect him of being too impatient to indulge in such a slow and sedentary occupation as that of angling for the scaly creature. But there were large fish at the Cape.

The holiday did not last long. His periods of unadulterated recreation seldom do. In February 1905 he was addressing meetings in the South-Western Transvaal. At Potchefstroom he frankly announced his unwillingness to "hide the fact that the source of all our evils was disunion, disruption. Our object of old was to found a United South Africa, stretching as *far as the Zambesi or farther*, but because we were at sixes and sevens we did not succeed. . . Let us take the hand of brotherhood. . . . But do not let us either approve or refuse anything until we have seen what it is proposed to confer on us. Until such time as we are trusted, we shall accept nothing. Our attitude is that we ask not for half an egg but for a whole one."

"We," in this part of his speech, evidently means the Boer people in the first place, but there is the old appeal for unity and co-operation. At Klerksdorp he advised his hearers to let "the union of Boer and Briton resemble that of England and Scotland—not that of England and Ireland. Let us co-operate in order to attain our old object: a United South Africa." Resolutions were passed at these meetings asking for self-government, not only for the Transvaal but equally for the Free State. This is important, because General Smuts, who, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt, had come to inspire these resolutions,

has been accused of cold and callous indifference to the fate and feelings of the sister Colony, whose noble assistance and perseverance in the war he is supposed to have completely ignored. At Lichtenburg he said that the new political association, Het Volk, was intended to hold out the hand of fellowship to the newcomer. Big men, he added, had become frightened, saying that Het Volk was a military organization. This he denied *in toto*. The people of the Transvaal had to govern the Transvaal. The country should not be governed from elsewhere.

On the 16th of May 1905 the Het Volk leaders carried the war right into the enemy's country. Together with Generals Botha and Beyers, General Smuts addressed a meeting at the Johannesburg Wanderers' Hall in order to preach to the very much unconverted. The speech was a very able one, academic in part, but chiefly practical and apposite, to the extent of proving a severe irritant to his Progressive opponents. He admitted that political parties were something in the nature of an evil in the country so shortly after the war, but pointed out that he and his had not been the first in the field. "Het Volk had sat still and done nothing until the Progressive organization was started on the Rand. After that, the Responsible Government Association was started as a counterblast, and it was only after that that Het Volk came into the field." The Progressive platform, he said, made a good deal of the British Flag, "but there was no dispute and no question about the British Flag. . . . The Government, though with the best intentions, had not held the balance evenly between the two sections of the population. . . . The position of Het Volk was perfectly clear. They had signed their names to a document at Vereeniging, and so long as that document lasted, they would *keep their word*." The Progressives, he argued, opposed responsible government, because they did not trust the people of the country; they "did not trust the Boers." He criticized the Lyttelton Constitution (afterwards withdrawn), and asked all his hearers to "do whatever was in their power to spread *conciliation*, forget the

things that divided them in the past, offer the hand of friendship, and so work together for the benefit of the country."

The conciliation policy, advocated so consistently and strongly by General Botha, was here recommended by General Smuts to the people of the Rand. It has often been objected to by ultra-Dutch partisans, who have maintained that Generals Botha and Smuts would have done better by preaching it to the English than to the Dutch. The answer to this is found in General Smuts' words in 1905. The English, it must be admitted, did not take them seriously at the time. The Progressives, at any rate, openly cast doubt on the sincerity of the conciliation programme. Although this attitude of theirs had, for a time, regrettable results, the unprejudiced observer can hardly blame them for their sceptical frame of mind. Subsequent events have proved that about one-half of General Smuts' own people did not believe in his protestations of loyalty. Small wonder, then, that the ultra-British felt disinclined to accept his assurances and all that they implied.

With regard to the Dutch objections to the policy of conciliation, those who are so fond of calling General Smuts a "traitor to his own race" on the strength of it, are apt to forget that the recipe was supposed to be applied all round. It is hardly possible to misjudge his motives—whatever one's opinion may be on the result of his efforts—when one recalls the fact that in March 1905 he, in company with General De la Rey, advised the Lichtenburg "bitter-enders" to conciliate with the "hands-uppers." The three years that had gone by since the Peace of Vereeniging had not sufficed to eliminate bitterness and recriminations between the various sections of the Boers themselves. Lord Milner had driven a sharp wedge into them, as a body, by his efforts to give social and ecclesiastical permanence to the National Scout movement. Any English reader who is unable to understand the intensity of the feeling against the Scouts should ask himself what the probable effect would be if a number of thoroughbred Englishmen

joined, say, the forces of William the Second in the course of an invasion of the soil of Old England! General Smuts and his fellow-leaders, however, urged those who had suffered with them from the defection of the Scouts to forgive the great wrong these men had done and to close up the ranks. Thus the Dutch might attain unity amongst themselves before the greater union they desired could be accomplished in the most fruitful manner.

Meanwhile, Lord Selborne had succeeded Lord Milner and on the 24th of May 1905 (General Smuts' thirty-fifth birthday), he publicly referred on the Rand to the subject of this sketch as "Mr. Smuts, the brilliant lawyer, the brilliant soldier"; at which there was unstinted applause. These amenities, contributing as they did in their own way towards the establishment of a much better relationship than had been found possible in the first Governor's time, were far from putting an end to the divergence of views between the Administration and Het Volk. Lord Selborne continued Lord Milner's policy in the main, though with marked suavity and tact. The Chinese, it seemed, had come to stay, and to put their greasy, yellow mark on all things South African. General Smuts persisted in his anti-Asiatic propaganda, which was closely bound up with the responsible government campaign. But all the time he told his audiences that responsible government and a white South Africa would not avail them unless they worked in harmony.

On the 19th of July he assisted in unveiling a monument erected at Frederikstad to the memory of men who had fallen in the war. He made an impressive speech, in Dutch, a few passages of which are here translated: "We have foregathered to honour the memory of those who willingly sacrificed their lives for their brethren—not to pay homage to one section alone. At this spot we find the graves of rebels alongside those of burghers; Boers lie buried here next to British; there are men from all parts of South Africa, and men who came from Holland. My heart is full. My lips refuse to shape the words that alone would be adequate to convey my feelings. . . . Seek not happiness in

luxurious living. It is the man who has been cleansed in the fires of adversity by whom a nation's greatness shall be built up. . . . We know how much we have lost. Perchance it is better thus. We have fought, we have struggled, for our rights. God hath taken our liberty from us—God is great."

In December 1905 he left the Transvaal for England at short notice. "For a change," said *De Volkstem*. In a sense, this was correct. We shall see what the change was.

VII

LONDON TO "PRAATFONTEIN"

THE visit to London was of a private nature. General Smuts said so. A journalist, however, is a surly, suspicious sort of person at the best of times, and so there were newspapers, both in South Africa and in England, that attached a political significance to the journey. It is possible, of course, that a man travels to London on private business, and yet finds both occasion and opportunity to combine that private business with what might be called public pleasure! There was a Liberal Government in power. Fate, the Jester, had come in Chinese-yellow garment to sweep away the Conservative Administration that had risen from strength to strength on the khaki wave of South African conquest. Questions of franchise, representation, redistribution, and delimitation of constituencies and such-like were on the *tapis* in the Transvaal.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 25th of January 1906 considered all this, taken in conjunction with the appearance of General Smuts on the Metropolitan horizon, serious enough to remind its readers that "British colonists have learned before now to tremble at the thought of a Liberal Government, and they may well prepare to face the worst. . . ." One wonders whether General Smuts is still looked upon in those nervous newspaper offices as quite such a sinister figure. The *Evening Standard* proposed to give the victim an opportunity of stating his case. It attempted to interview him. General Smuts "courteously

declined." "I can say nothing to the Press," he said; "I never do." The proverb has it that "never is a long time," but in the whole course of his career General Smuts has certainly granted very few Press interviews—for publication. He did say, to the *Evening Standard's* young man, that he was very pleased to be back in England, where he had had his University education. There is no doubt that he was speaking the literal truth when he said that he was glad to be in England. The weekly newspaper *South Africa* was not quite so glad. It delivered itself of the tremendously profound opinion that "Smuts in the Transvaal, Hofmeyr in Cape Town, and Leyds in Holland have been allowed to sap and mine loyal South Africa too long." The justice and generosity of this utterance should be measured not by the reference to Leyds and Smuts, who had been opponents of England, but by that to the late Mr. Hofmeyr. *South Africa* added that General Smuts must be sent back to the place whence he came, to live in peace and amity under the "liberal Constitution which has been granted to the Transvaal. Any coquetting . . . will spell irretrievable disaster in the Transvaal and South Africa generally." Time has given its verdict with regard to the irretrievable nature of the damage done by General Smuts, when he declared himself not quite satisfied with that *liberal* Constitution, and asked for a *Liberal* one. But on the 27th of January 1906 the *Daily Express*, another organ of light and leading, hailed him as the "Dutch Irreconcilables' Agent in London." Mr. Hosken, a well-known Johannesburg man, who was then a M.L.C., gave Reuter an interview on the eve of his return to South Africa. He said that General Smuts had come "to obscure the real issue."

The London *Daily Mail* showed its superior knowledge of men and things by solemnly informing its readers that "Mr. J. C. Smuts" had been "State *Secretary*" at a critical period. The *Daily Mirror*, not to be outdone, announced that Mr. J. C. Smuts (the title of General was not popular even then) was the accredited agent of the "Afrikander

Bond of the Transvaal." That such an organization never at any time existed was, of course, a mere detail. The *Globe* of the 1st of February, evidently wishing to be polite, referred to "Mr. J. C. Smuts . . . sometimes known as General Smuts." The Imperial Government of 1915–16 appears to have been of the same opinion as the *Globe* of 1906 with regard to the "sometime-ness" of his generalship.

Meanwhile, "Mr." J. C. Smuts, nothing daunted by the flutter in the Fleet Street dovecotes, paid a visit to Cambridge in order to revive old memories. The *African World*, which was controlled by a gentleman who at least knew something about South Africa and its inhabitants, published a real portrait of General Smuts. Lord Selborne's opinion of him, it said, "should serve to silence the ill-bred sneers which have appeared in certain second-rate publications." This was a little unkind, perhaps, but not wholly undeserved. Early in February General Smuts broke through his habit, allowing himself to be interviewed by Reuter. He expressed "warm appreciation of the cordial reception extended to him in London." In South Africa we know something about coals of fire!

I am not aware in exactly how many languages General Smuts can preserve a severe silence. In any case, he returned to South Africa without anybody being very much the wiser as to the results of his visit, if any. On the 23rd of March of the same year, however, he made a speech at the Empress Theatre, Pretoria, that led to a great deal of controversy. He mentioned, *inter alia*, an oration of Lord Milner's in the House of Lords which he called "bitter." The people of South Africa, he said, did not identify themselves with any party in England, but the Liberals would certainly strive earnestly to do that which was right. He had not asked, while in London, for anything on behalf of the Boers that he had not likewise advocated on behalf of the English population. He reminded his hearers of the fact that, eleven years before at Kimberley, his first public appearance was devoted to the

cause of co-operation. He was still working for that, in spite of all that had happened. The struggle was no longer between Boer and Briton. The economic question had assumed transcendent importance. Het Volk would not refuse to welcome any Englishman. The *voetsak* policy (this was a reference to a far-from-happy speech made by the late Sir George Farrar) belonged to another political party. The Jameson Raid was the first shot fired in the war of 1899. Since Vereeniging, the Boers had behaved well, meticulously observing their obligations. The Lyttelton Constitution had gone by the board, and the Progressives were now talking once more about "cutting the painter." The civil service was overweighted. Het Volk would have to do its best for the ex-officials of the South African Republic, who, after sacrificing their all for the country, were now unemployed. They knew, however, that they could not kick the English officials out of the country. He wound up by moving a resolution condemning the Lyttelton Constitution, asking for a more liberal one, and expressing the hope that co-operation and satisfaction would result. In regard to the mines, he said that they were doing a great work, but the owners should not be allowed to monopolize power or to subordinate the country to the Stock Exchange.

This, briefly put, was the gist of a speech that was moderate in tone, though no doubt calculated to entice a few votes. I can vouch for the accuracy of the epitome, as well as for the spirit of the utterance, for I was only a few feet away from the speaker. This is mentioned here because a great hubbub arose. The Johannesburg correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, no doubt specially qualified to judge as a Johannesburg and not a Pretoria man, cabled that "speeches of a most violent character had been made. Mr. Smuts made a furious attack on the mining industry." The *Daily Express* was informed from Johannesburg that "the policy of the Boers in attempting to oust as many Englishmen as possible from the Transvaal was voiced by Mr. Smuts in a speech at Pretoria." In

view of the words quoted above, this would have been undeniably amusing, if it had not been for the fact that by making General Smuts say the very opposite of what he conveyed to his audience, the gentlemen who crammed the cables were doing an enormous amount of harm. It is not surprising that people in Europe gained a totally incorrect impression of the sincerity, and of the character generally, of the man who was gradually becoming one of the most important factors in South African affairs.

On the 26th of March 1906 an officer who had been captured by General Smuts in the war wrote a signed letter to the London *Times*, questioning indeed the sincerity of the Het Volk policy towards the natives, but giving the assurance that "no Bayard could have behaved better to an enemy" than General Smuts had done towards his prisoners of war. This was something gained towards a proper appreciation, but the Johannesburg correspondent of the *Times* did his best to descend to the level of journalism occupied by his colleagues. He accused General Smuts of having uttered all sorts of atrocious sentiments, particularly concerning the question of civil servants, and *De Volkstem* of having deliberately suppressed these passages. A challenge was promptly issued by the paper attacked, but it was never taken up—for the best of reasons. The Empress Theatre speech breathed the old spirit of harmony and co-operation; it was surely a little hard that such garbled versions should be cabled out to the place where our Constitution was in the making. At Germiston, on the 28th of March, General Smuts, who is the reverse of thin-skinned, complained about this systematic misrepresentation. He said he "often saw the words he had spoken in all moderation and sincerity appear in the newspapers full of bitterness and malice. At Pretoria he had quoted Lord Milner's words to the effect that the Boers would keep out of the country all British officials and British settlers. In the papers, next day, those words were attributed to *him*." He repudiated any intention of setting his face against the interests of the mining industry. He urged his

Boer hearers to assist in convincing the British population that co-operation was desired. General Botha spoke in the same strain ; I can well remember the reluctance with which a large proportion of the Generals' followers, who needed education on the question of dwelling together with the newcomer in perfect amity, received this teaching. The phrases used by General Smuts may be looked upon as commonplaces by any one reading them to-day ; but at the time it required courage and determination to preach what he did. The reader will have noticed that this was merely a repetition of the utterances of previous years. The very fact that his own people did not begin to take him seriously on the point until this period proves the magnitude of the task he had undertaken. Similar conditions prevailed on the other side. The late Sir E. P. Solomon and his associates were called traitors and renegades in Johannesburg because they openly advocated a *rapprochement* with the Dutch population and showed that their advocacy was sincere.

On the 9th of April, at Gezina, a Pretoria suburb, General Smuts was a little more emphatic concerning the dangers of Rand-magnate domination than he had been in March. He spoke of the unrest prevailing among the people, and foretold "a big fight ahead," with a victory for Het Volk. The late General Beyers was present at this meeting. There were calls for a speech from him, but he said that, "after listening to the language that came from General Botha's heart, and to the eloquence of this Socrates" (pointing to General Smuts), the best thing he himself could do was to sit down. There is no denying that General Smuts waxed eloquent at these propaganda meetings, often held in overcrowded, ill-lighted, draughty halls. His pessimistic vein had not entirely disappeared. All the world over, the politician in opposition speaks, and presumably acts, differently in many respects from the politician in power. Occasionally, while whipping up the constitutional support required to oust the powers that were, the General Smuts of those days was on the verge of becoming dramatic. No one could paint better than he the evils of Chinadom and

financial predominance—evils that would grow and multiply and devour the unhappy Transvaal. No one was better able than he to represent in glowing colours to an audience the benefits that would result if only "the right men" were returned to power. It cannot be said that he ever made his future supporters any definite promises as to material results, but his roseate predictions do appear to have impressed some of those who listened to him—unused as they were to the grandiloquent language of the hustings—a little more powerfully than was desirable for the future peace of mind of a responsible statesman.

At about this time General Smuts began to achieve the distinction of being frequently caricatured. The papers of the Rand represented him as suffering from "jim-jams," and as a spider seeking to enmesh the innocent voter in his web. The late Mr. Edmund Garrett (who had been editor of the *Cape Times*) mentioned General Smuts as a factor in the course of an article on the situation, published in the *National Review*. He asked "how far England would have got with that young man," had it not been for the "logic of the stricken field." It was Mr. Garrett who had applied to General Smuts the sobriquet of "the little Grey Cardinal," a picturesque appellation that would fit him like a cowl, if it were not for the fact that the epithet "little" seems out of place, taken either physically or otherwise.

In April 1906 he spoke at Silkaatsnek, near Pretoria, when he praised the self-effacing work of Generals Botha, Burger, and De la Rey. "I am proud of such men," he exclaimed; "they might have occupied important positions, but preferred to be little and despised along with their people. Let us do everything in order to strengthen their hands." During the same month he and his colleagues on the Executive Committee of Het Volk signed a manifesto against the spirit of "trekking," which was luring a number of his people to foreign countries. The emigration movement was, in fact, encouraged by some of the men who have since blossomed forth as "Nationalists" and "the only true Afrikanders with whom South Africa is always first."

At that time, the Argentine and other oversea countries must have formed part of South Africa on the maps that guided these patriots!

In April, too, General Smuts, together with General Botha, made another descent on the Western Transvaal. Travelling in that part of the country was no joke, thanks to a most inconveniently arranged time-table. Nights begin to get cold in the Transvaal towards the end of April, and to travel from Potchefstroom to Klerksdorp one had to get up long before the sun dissipated penetrating morning mists. I can still see General Smuts, all but the tip of his nose hidden away in the deep recesses of a thick great-coat, awaiting the hotel bus that was to take him to the station. He was inclined to be taciturn—not so silent as in the old Johannesburg days, but almost morose, compared with the expansiveness which came with the habit of power and political prosperity. General Botha was always more even-tempered, and used to chat freely with us, his fellow-travellers, on those nocturnal pilgrimages to Western shrines.

At Potchefstroom, General Smuts said that, whereas there had been a time when the Boers could afford to consider themselves only, they could not now leave the English population out of the reckoning. At Klerksdorp he spoke, contrary to custom, before General Botha, explaining that "big guns might well be kept in the background until the critical moment had come to fire a telling shot. He is the old leader, the trusted chief of our party." In June 1906 he gave a pressman an interview on the subject of the direct accusation made by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, to the effect that the Boer leaders were supporting the native rebels in Natal as against white authority in that Colony. General Smuts absolutely denied this, adding that the Boers, so far from working for political paramountcy in a racial sense, would give the mine-owners "every assistance in repatriating the Chinese and working the mines with British workers at a fair rate of wages." The latter offer has not yet been taken advantage of.

In July 1906 a large and most successful meeting of Het Volk was held at Heidelberg, where General Smuts once more denounced in unequivocal terms the insinuation that the Boers wished to tear down the flag. At Vereeniging he had said that the last shot between whites in South Africa had been fired, and it was still his wish that that should be so. Providence had left only one road clear—that of co-operation, trust, and the formation of one great South African nation. The same month saw him in the Western Transvaal once again, and always the burden of his song was co-operation, friendship, trust, unity. This fact cannot be too strongly emphasized, for the reason already indicated, namely, that his chauvinistic compatriots have of late years accused him, over and over again, of having deserted his colours, whereas the more closely his past history is investigated the more strongly is the conviction forced upon us that he is still fighting under the colours he nailed to the mast in the years when a new course had to be steered in the Transvaal. This does not mean that he neglected the language or traditions of his own section. At one meeting he said : "I hear that some Afrikander parents refuse to have their children taught Dutch. Brethren, how can such a thing be ! The children of both nationalities must learn each other's tongue. Let us maintain our national aspirations." He criticized the authorities for "attempting to deprive the Dutch of their language through the schools, as had been done in the concentration camps." He encouraged his people to develop agriculturally, and not to forget that their children had to learn more than they themselves had done in the years when a steady aim with the rifle was more important than book knowledge. He praised the C.N.E. (Christian National Education) movement, stating that it would not cease until the parents' rights had been recognized. This was at Schweizer-Reneke. At Lichtenburg, on the 28th of July, he spoke of the "great treasure of national self-respect, gained by the spilling of much blood and tears, and to be rated at its full value." At Ventersdorp he urged the

building-up of "a new and great nation, neither Boer nor British, but a nation that shall make South Africa into a big, free country."

In August, at a Krugersdorp banquet, he once more advocated the "blending of the races" and the abandonment of a top-dog policy. He dealt with the coming federation, or unification, of South Africa, even before the Transvaal was autonomous. Just then, not a few voices were being heard pleading for a union between the Transvaal and Natal only, but General Smuts would not hear of it. He spoke of his antagonism to a perpetuation of the Chinese labour system, which he reiterated in a strong speech at Johannesburg on the 12th of November 1906. Things were coming to a head. The elections under the new Constitutions were pending. The Mandarin forces of Johannesburg felt that it would require a supreme rally on their part to preserve their yellow heritage, if indeed this was to prove at all possible. It seems a little childish, when one looks back on it, but one of the methods employed to discredit General Smuts as a speaker was to criticize his accent! He had just thanked Mr. H. C. Hull for his manly stand in the Legislative Council against the importation of pigtails, when "a voice from behind shouted 'Speak English!'" The *Transvaal Leader*, the following day, magnified the incident into "numerous entreaties, called forth by his accent, that he should speak English." The "gentleman" who gave an exhibition of his taste in his attempt to prejudice the speaker in the eyes (or the ears) of the audience was a Mr. Mather. General Smuts knew him, and immediately took up the incident, showing, if I may borrow Mr. Hewlett's phrase concerning his Jehan, that he is too proud to give pride a thought. "When Mr. Mather made the interruption, he probably was correct," said the victim; "my English is far from flawless." As a matter of fact, General Smuts is known all over South Africa for his mastery of the English language, but he has a touch of the Malmesbury accent. It is not only the pronunciation of

the *r* that imparts a faint foreign flavour to his speech, nor even his *i*, which sounds almost like the German *i*. When he says "it is," the sound is not exactly "eet ees," although there is an approach to it. Nor does his speech necessarily betray him when, in the word "result," the *e* is mute and the *s* is sounded too sharply. There are many English South Africans of note who pronounce the word in the same way. But there is an impalpable inflection, making itself felt generally rather than in separate words or letters, that characterizes General Smuts' utterance. His idiom and his grammar (*rara avis* in South Africa !) are so striking, however, that only a churl could perpetrate an interruption of this sort; only a blind party organ could quote it with approval. The Johannesburg *Star* of the 14th of November struck another note. It referred to General Smuts' "meteoric career," called him "one of fortune's favourites," and drew attention to the fact that he had "never varied his essential policy by a hair's-breadth, and had no cause to look with shame on any chapter in his public record." It added, to make its position clear: "We happen to regard Mr. Smuts as a peculiarly dangerous political guide for a young British Colony."

There were many public meetings during this period, at which General Smuts never tired of repeating his doctrine of racial conciliation and Chinese repatriation, assuring the mine-owners that there would be replacement and that the industry would not suffer. On the 22nd of December 1906 he addressed a meeting at Gezina as the official Het Volk candidate in the Legislative Assembly elections for the Wonderboom division of Pretoria. No statement of his created such a stir as one reported by Mr. P. R. Krause, a German mining engineer and newspaper correspondent at Johannesburg, who alleged that, in the course of an interview, General Smuts had said: "No Chinese will be allowed to leave unless proper substitutes have been previously secured." The accuracy of this version was afterwards challenged, but at many meetings General Smuts gave similar assurances, which considerably nonplussed

most of us. Former declarations of policy on the part of Het Volk had appeared to be much more definite. His opponents now submitted him to merciless banter. His friends asked, either openly or *sub rosa*, what it all meant, and whether the anti-pigtail policy had been jettisoned. It seemed like a betrayal! And yet, nothing could be simpler to him who looks back on events as they occurred. The statement merely meant to imply that it was easy enough to obtain substitutes. It would have been impracticable to send all the Chinese back to Asia at one and the same time. There were tens of thousands of them, so that the question of transport alone would have presented insuperable difficulties. What was more serious was the dislocation of the mining industry that would have followed precipitate action. The process could not be otherwise than gradual and well-considered; it was no more than the duty of a serious statesman, who would probably be called upon to take charge of the administration, to make a guarded pronouncement of this nature. And it certainly was good policy on the part of a politician, looking for votes among the timid, to emphasize the non-revolutionary character of his party's intentions. But at the time, all this was shrouded in election fog; and here, at any rate, may be found an explanation of the fact that such a straightforward announcement could have been so completely misunderstood. This is not the only occasion, however, on which words of General Smuts', interpreted quite wrongly at first, were vindicated by the efflux of time.

If, during an election struggle that was recognized to be of vital importance to the future, he canvassed widely for assistance to his party—his own chances were never in doubt—there were some temptations with which he refused to flirt even for a moment. At Pretoria North, for instance, he was asked why he did not join the Labour party, seeing that he professed his willingness to co-operate with the working man. "I cannot agree to Socialism," was his answer, and he has held Socialism in check ever since. On the 12th of January 1907 he said at Villieria:

"They talk about Imperialism in England. Why should we not here speak of a South African Imperialism?" He added that he did not desire a brand of Imperialism that neglected burning questions of home policy, and that the day must come when South Africa would unite in order to build up one great nation.

Since the Boer War there had been no means of testing the feeling of the electorate; it is not surprising, therefore, that there were many Richmonds in the field. The Progressives had induced a Mr. W. D. Bruce to lead their forlorn hope in Wonderboom. This, as far as I am aware, is Mr. W. D. Bruce's one claim to have his name handed down to posterity. Pretoria had never acclaimed him before, nor has it heard of him since. But there was another, and a better-known, candidate in the shape of Mr. H. R. Abercrombie, who sought the suffrages of Wonderboom as an "Independent." It is not known whether General Smuts exercised his persuasive talents, but it is a matter of history that Mr. Abercrombie soon discovered that, at heart, he was a "Het Volk" man. This coincided with another discovery, made by the electors of Troyeville, Johannesburg. These estimable people, or let us say a number of them, wanted Mr. Abercrombie for their very own. Accordingly, Mr. Abercrombie mounted a platform at Troyeville, and General Smuts, who is not vindictive, stood by his side in order to recount the virtues of this fellow-Pretorian to the trustful Johannesburg voter. The recommendation, as it happened, did not avail. I have never been able to discover that mourning was worn in high Het Volk circles on account of this failure on the part of General Smuts to sway the people of Johannesburg. In 1910 Mr. Abercrombie once more opposed General Smuts during the Union elections in Pretoria West. On that occasion the votes polled by Mr. Abercrombie were smaller in number than the members of his committee. This affecting little double episode is recorded here in order to show what big men in South Africa have to put up with when they aspire to parliamentary honours.

General Smuts did not visit Johannesburg merely for the purpose of promoting the cause of Mr. Abercrombie. A vast amount of work had to be done in connection with the organization of the anti-Progressive (i.e. anti-Chinese) parties, but there were few men who possessed the qualifications and the energy to perform it. Only those who worked with General Smuts know how whole-heartedly he threw himself into the administrative part of an election campaign. Much midnight oil was consumed. This is unusual with him. He is often called "a glutton for work," but he is not enamoured of long hours, preferring strenuous labour and a thorough rest. Even in Johannesburg, however, there are only twenty-four hours to the day, and after meetings in the evening he was sometimes obliged to devote a large portion of the night to the work of planning and systematizing. Meanwhile, his Unionist friends did not neglect him. The production of cartoons waxed fast and furious. There was one in the *Star* showing General Smuts and his associates pushing the British working man over a precipice labelled "Starvation." Then there was the famous, or infamous, poster limning the Het Volk leaders and their associates in their rôle as "The Wreckers." They were picturesquely dressed, after the most approved grand opera style, as bloodthirsty pirates. With melodramatic gesture, they flashed false signals from a rocky coast in order to lure the good ship *Transvaal* to perdition and secure a share of the spoils. It is an established fact that many electors were unsophisticated enough to take this literally! And the cry went forth "Vote British!" But General Smuts was imperturbable. When Colonel Sir Aubrey Woolls-Sampson, of Jameson Raid memory, said that there would be two parties in Parliament, a Boer party and a British party, the candidate for Wonderboom called this a "damnable doctrine." He quoted cases in which Het Volk had withdrawn Dutch candidates and were supporting Englishmen in their stead. At Daspoort, on the 23rd of January, he carried his hearers back to the

almost forgotten Kimberley speech of 1895: "When, on the bloody battlefields, I saw Boer and Briton dead, my old ideal came back. Those men who had been killed by each other should have stood together, and fought together for one cause, a great South Africa." He pointed to the large native population as a cogent reason for co-operation among the whites. Incidentally, he removed any lingering doubt as to his Chinese policy by the words: "The introduction of the Chinese was a crime. We shall not rest until the last Chinaman has left the shores of South Africa." On the 25th of January he was asked at Meintjeskop, which is not an Irish centre, whether the people would be compelled to join the Volunteers (!); his answer foreshadowed the Defence Act that was to come about five years later. He expected, he said, every man loyally to assist the Government whenever danger threatened. He trusted they would show a fighting spirit for their land in the future, as they had done in the past.

The cock-and-bull stories spread by the other side about Het Volk's intentions were without number, and General Smuts had his work cut out to contradict the more plausible among them. On the 31st of January he wrote to Mr. E. P. Solomon at Johannesburg: "The Russian Jews who come to this country intend to make it their home; they always have been and will continue to be heartily welcomed by our organization. No measures are ever likely to be taken to restrict their immigration to this country." He had a habit of referring to even the most obscure candidates of the anti-Chinese combination whom he supported as "my old friend Jack" and "my trusted friend Jim." This tag added considerably to the gaiety of the nation during the grim election contest. It was a source of prolific inspiration to many persifleurs with tongue, pen, and pencil. The savour of the jest was added to by the fact that, generally speaking, Oom Jannie is not conspicuous for indiscriminate amiability to casual acquaintances, however cordial his manner may be to men whom he knows well. But he loves a joke—at

times. The late Sir George Farrar discovered this when he was maladroit enough to state at one of his meetings, in connection with the Chinese question, that the issue was: the Transvaal versus Downing Street. General Smuts immediately turned this to account by replying that "he did not want to pick a quarrel with the British Government. He knew what a quarrel with England meant. He did not wish to spend another three years in the open air, as he had done in the past." This was on the 31st of January, at Johannesburg. The same evening he spoke in another part of the town. It is interesting to recall that Mr. (now Major) F. H. P. Creswell seconded a vote of confidence in the candidate supported by General Smuts, and said that the Nationalist-Het Volk party was "the true British party, representative of British traditions." In 1914, Mr. Creswell, then the leader of our Labour party . . . But why institute comparisons? General Smuts invaded the constituency that Mr. Creswell was wooing in 1907, calling him "every inch a man." He would probably deliver the same verdict to-day, whatever change Colonel Creswell's opinion of General Smuts and his party may have undergone.

Not all of the election activity was confined to vote-catching. At Springs, General Smuts repudiated in the most unequivocal fashion two candidates of the parties supporting him; he did so for various reasons, one of these being that a Mr. Wentzel (who afterwards became a Hertzog supporter) had at Germiston advocated the restriction of Jewish immigration. There was also a certain amount of constructive policy adumbrated, General Smuts distinguishing himself by insisting on the importance of the Transvaal as an agricultural country.

The racial note was sounded far too often. Mr. (now Sir) Abe Bailey expressed floating suspicions in a dictum to the effect that "if Het Volk won, they would win back by politics what they had lost by the sword." General Smuts firmly declared: "We have worked away from the dead issues, and have started a new career. . . . Three

years ago we approached our English friends privately; we told them that we were determined never to have the race question again. . . . We wanted to see only one person, i.e. the South African, the citizen of the Transvaal and South Africa." Precepts of this kind he carried into practice, for he consistently appealed for a fair hearing to be given his opponents on the political platform. Feeling ran high, and the appeal was not a superfluous one, to whichever party it might have been addressed. Wherever the fight was thickest, General Smuts was to be found. When victory came, the suggestion that he should take the Premiership was mooted in various quarters. Even newspapers that had to fight him tooth and nail before the verdict of the polls was delivered, now recognized his moderation. On all hands the value to the country of his intellectual attainments was admitted. Mr. Merriman, at a Stellenbosch meeting held to congratulate Het Volk, said that "the new majority, as he knew from a letter he had just received from General Smuts, were only too careful not to accentuate racial differences, and they dwelt upon the fact that their victory would have been impossible without the aid of the English."

I do not think it is much of a secret to-day that, even among the Het Volk party's principal supporters, there were some who thought that General Smuts should be Premier, when Sir R. Solomon was defeated by Sir P. Fitzpatrick in Pretoria. No one, however, can say that General Smuts countenanced any attempt, if deliberate attempt there was, to dispute General Botha's claims. Cabinet-making did not prove an easy task to inexperienced parliamentarians, but a few *indabas* on the stoep of the Pretoria Club and elsewhere soon settled the choice.

Concerning his attitude towards General Botha, General Smuts left no doubt whatsoever. A public presentation of a portrait in oils to the Premier, in recognition of his leadership, was organized by Dr. F. V. Engelenburg, editor of *De Volkstem*. In the course of a letter to Dr. Engelenburg, which was published, General Smuts wrote: "I agree with

you that no one more than General Botha is entitled to appreciation and gratitude. The victory of the people's party at the polls is largely due to his constant labours, dating from the day of peace, in uniting the citizens of the Transvaal into one compact, permanent organization; to his common sense and mature counsel; to his moderate policy and his efforts in the cause of cordial co-operation between the races. These excellent services deserve to be worthily recognized."

General Smuts, then, became Colonial Secretary, that is to say Minister for the Interior, in the Botha Cabinet. As such he attended a banquet, given at Pretoria in March 1907, in honour of the first Responsible Government in the Transvaal under the British Flag. His name did not figure on the toast-list, but there were insistent calls of 'Smuts, Smuts!" It is not at all exceptional in this country for after-dinner speeches to be made in such circumstances, though they may not be on the programme. General Smuts never has any difficulty in regard to self-restraint, though on this occasion he was heard to say, with a note of gratification in his voice : "Dis *myn* takhare" ("Those are *my* die-hards"). A similar function took place at Johannesburg, where he was one of the principal speakers. It was easy to see that triumph had not turned his head, for he "rejoiced at being able to work together socially, and also, he hoped, politically. He hoped the precedent of the Asiatic question would be followed more and more." This was a reference to the assistance he was receiving from the Opposition in connection with legislation affecting the status of British Indians. His first Bill in the Assembly was on this subject, and the discussion, owing to the general agreement, was so short that one could not have foretold the nickname of "Praat-fontein" (our equivalent to "The Talking-shop") by which the Transvaal Parliament afterwards became widely known.

At Johannesburg General Smuts added : "The debatable ground that lies between us is a mere narrow strip. There is a broad, common area upon which all sensible people

are agreed. As far as we are concerned, we shall do our best to make the Transvaal united and prosperous." It will be seen that the key-note had remained the same, that there was no essential difference between Jan Smuts before the elections and Jan Smuts comfortably ensconced as one of the principal arbiters of the country's fate.

VIII

"PRAATFONTEIN" TO CULLINAN

SHORTLY after his accession to office, the Colonial Secretary made a public pronouncement on Education that attracted a great deal of notice. The Rand papers welcomed it as broad, statesmanlike, and tending to promote the co-operation of the races. It was directed against separatism, thus showing that General Smuts in his capacity as a Minister of the Crown would not support the C.N.E. movement, mentioned in a previous chapter.[1] Shortly afterwards, he granted an interview to a journalist, in which he laid stress on the necessity for industrial and technical, as well as intellectual, education. On various other occasions his utterances have proved that, great as is his interest in educational matters, he is not the worshipper of intellect that so many people pretend to see in Jan Smuts, but one who is in touch with all phases of the life around him. To the interview in question he added a plea for the establishment of "labour colonies" and for a "white man's country." The labour colonies afterwards materialized as "poor-white settlements." The white man's country seems as far off as ever—in fact, many South Africans declare that, however much one may sympathize with the ideal indicated by the term, it can never be anything but a misnomer in a country the greater part of whose inhabitants are blacks. But if this is indeed the correct view, it is shown that General Smuts may be regarded as an idealist in politics.

[1] See p, 87.

When General Botha, almost immediately after the formation of the Cabinet, went to England, General Smuts, though the youngest of his colleagues, was appointed Acting Prime Minister. In this capacity he paid a visit to Delagoa Bay in order to judge on the spot as to its value as a port and railway terminus. It may be regarded as significant that he called on our neighbour so early in the day, especially since it was not long before he visited Portuguese territory again, this time travelling to Beira via Salisbury.

In April 1907 the C.N.E. organization held its annual Congress at Pretoria. In spite of the warning given, many people were considerably surprised by the speech General Smuts made at the Congress, by invitation. He showed why the movement had been necessary in the interests of the Dutch nationality at one time, and why it had become superfluous now, foreshadowing an Education Bill that would enable more Dutch to be taught in the State schools; while the Government would take over, on generous terms, the establishments of the C.N.E. It is no exaggeration to say that this statement, although it might have been expected from any one having the power to remedy the grievances that had caused the C.N.E. movement, had a stunning effect on most of those present. Mr. (now Senator) A. D. W. Wolmarans was one of the leaders who were instrumental in carrying a decision to maintain the organization. This was arrived at after a secret conclave, which resolved to continue the clamour for State aid to private schools. In the sequel, the C.N.E. schools were taken over before many months had passed, and the movement can hardly be said to have survived General Smuts' speech, which once more was applauded by the Press. Natural as his attitude now appears, especially in view of its success, the step required strength of purpose no less than tact.

During the same month General Smuts spoke at the Klerksdorp agricultural show. Many Government supporters had sent in applications for State appointments, evidently imagining that the return to power of their party

meant a wholesale provision of billets. The Colonial Secretary took this early opportunity of uttering a warning against the tendency among his people to look for avenues of employment that would, to many, "prove to be blind alleys." This straightforwardness was not calculated to enhance the speaker's popularity; if any one had gained an incorrect impression from the Empress Theatre speech, the opportunity for being disabused was afforded in unmistakable fashion by the Cabinet's chief spokesman. There was only one long vista before the Transvaal, he said, and that was the agricultural one. But, he added, there were drawbacks: "The other day I was speaking to a shrewd old man. I asked him what was the fault of the Transvaal. The fault of the Transvaal, the man replied, is that the ground is too low; 'you have to bend your back to work' (laughter). Well, the ground in the Transvaal is very low, but I hope people will bend their backs and work, and not grumble and look to the Government. All the Government can do is to give an impetus in this or that direction." General Botha has frequently, since then, had to preach the gospel of *baatje uittrek* (take your coat off) to the country population. This was not relished by all of them at first, but the advice has in the course of time come to be recognized as sound in a country with a climate warm enough to induce occasional drowsiness. In 1907 plain speaking of this description was not overwelcome in many quarters, coming, as it did, so soon after the soothing tone of election speeches, and General Smuts is known to have expressed his regret at the fact that, in an unguarded moment, he had allowed the little sarcasm to slip out. This vain longing for the power to recall the spoken word also applied to another expression he used at Klerksdorp. Sir George Farrar had, in a speech to his constituents at Boksburg, jocularly referred to the substantial Government majority in the Assembly, remarking that the Progressives were almost powerless, because Ministers could at any time "steam-roller" them. General Smuts now took up this quip, as follows: "The country had placed at the disposal of the Government a large

majority, and in the last resort, if problems could not be solved in any other way, they must put the steam-roller into motion." This sentence was destined to add a favourite term to the political jargon of South Africa, for whenever the Botha Government appealed to the division bell in order to settle a dispute in the Transvaal Parliament, members were wont to shout derisively, "The steam-roller again!" Dozens of cartoons represented ministers as driving the dread juggernaut car over a prostrate and flattened-out Opposition. General Botha or General Smuts was usually shown at the wheel, what time some colleague was applying the oil-can. In the Union Assembly, too, the term was often heard, particularly in the halcyon days before the Great War had given both General Hertzog and Sir T. Smartt an accession of strength at the expense of the Government party. The event of the year, in Parliament, has always been the steam-rollering of General Smuts himself, an occurrence that was naturally very rare, except in the Upper House. In the Transvaal Assembly he was once deserted by most of his followers on what was admittedly a non-party question. In the Union *Volksraad* defeat on one occasion came to him as a Minister representing all his colleagues. It is a proof of the composite nature of General Smuts' character that he has become known, not only as the driver of the steam-roller but as the South African statesman best able to pacify a troublesome Opposition by diplomatic, suave contributions to a debate. This holds good particularly of questions that were seemingly leading to a hopeless *impasse*, such as the education difficulty in the Transvaal. His is a power of persuasion, a peculiar humour, that is almost irresistible when he is pleased to exercise it to the full. It so happens, however, that this quality does not appeal to every frame of mind. Since the advent of Labour and Nationalist troubles in South Africa, General Smuts has almost invariably played the part of the red rag to the bulls of Socialism and Race Separatism. General Botha is the happy possessor of a more magnetic personality. In spite of the fact that the

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Premier's one-time enviable position can no longer be said to exist, he is still able occasionally to bear down violent opposition, even from the quarters named, by charm of manner, when logical pleas are of no avail. It is probably for this reason, and because General Botha has proved such a strong cementing force in his own party—torn often by dissension—that the combination of the two men has proved so singularly effective.

At the Klerksdorp show, General Smuts took the opportunity of assuring his hearers that his ambition was not of so vaulting a nature as some people supposed—and still suppose, by the way. "Mr. Neser," he remarked, "has said that I do not want to be a private in the ranks, that I want to be a leader. The criticism is well meant; there is some justice in it. But you will find me, however much mistaken I may be, always willing to serve. I shall never allow personal motives to sway me in doing my duty, whether as a general or a private in the political army." These words remind one of Mr. Merriman's well-known description of himself as a "humble musket-bearer in the ranks" of the Union Government's supporters.

General Smuts concluded his speech with an appeal for the elimination of old issues, in order that the country might forge ahead. He urged the necessity for retrenchment in the public service, another highly unpopular measure—with the English section this time. The Minister announced his intention to promote irrigation, co-operation, and other bucolic "ations" of great importance to a young country.

In the same month he attended a banquet at Pretoria in connection with a commercial congress, at which he voiced the "universal dissatisfaction in the Transvaal with the existing Customs Union." This led him to a dissertation on schemes of South African "federation." He pointed out that the motives inducing people to "federate" were largely other than those which had to do with Customs Unions, and in this connection counselled "patience and forbearance. They should not try to hustle towards any great issue, but approach it slowly and cautiously, so that

'the work would be great, solid, and enduring." Without in any way implying that the work of Union does not deserve these adjectives, one may be forgiven a smile at the advice. Here was the Hustler-in-Chief to the Transvaal (and to South Africa generally) telling us to be patient and slow. Evidently unexpected factors took a hand in the hustling game, because mere "federation" had no stronger opponent, less than two years after this speech was delivered, than the man who cautiously took the word into his mouth at Pretoria.

In May 1907 (within three months of polling-day) it fell to the lot of General Smuts to make another weighty pronouncement. The Rand was suffering considerably from unemployment. Many of those affected came to Pretoria as a deputation to the Government to claim assistance. In reply, General Smuts used not a few words to assure the men of his sympathy, but he told them quite distinctly that they were not going to have things all their own way. Government had, in order to relieve the distress, given work to unskilled labourers at the rate of 3s. 6d. a day, which was truly a small wage in the Transvaal, in spite of certain privileges attaching to it. Strong exception was taken to the 3s. 6d. by various critics, and the Colonial Secretary seized his opportunity in order to silence them, if possible. His advice was: Rather live on 3s. 6d. a day than live on charity. He dealt with various suggestions made, exposed the impracticability of some of them, but promised that Government would exert itself sympathetically in the matter. The deputation left. Within a few days . . . they returned. On this occasion, General Smuts did not forget to remind them that his time was limited. He gave them a hearing, nevertheless; repeated the offer he had previously made; assured them it was well considered, and stated most unambiguously that Government "could not go a step further." The repatriation of Chinamen, he added, would shortly lead to the finding of work for whites. This reminder to the Progressives that election promises are not always of the substance of pie-crust led to a pro-

longed howl of indignation in their newspapers, which suggested that "Smuts was preaching a vendetta" and many other unpleasant ideas.

He celebrated his thirty-seventh birthday by calling out the Camerons and Queen's Bays to patrol the Reef against a miners' strike. The movement was assuming serious proportions, but subsided when a display of force cowed the lawless elements. The Johannesburg *Sunday Times* was moved by this event to exclaim that "Gilbert still lives, though Gilbert no longer writes." It must indeed have been a strange sensation for the young Colonial Secretary. With the concurrence of His Excellency, of course, he practically ordered, though nominally requested, the Imperial officer commanding to mobilize against many of the men who had fought five years before under that officer commanding against himself. Thus General Smuts was tasting the wine of power in many ways, but it never went to his head. In June he was re-elected a member of the Head Committee of Het Volk, at a Congress held in Pretoria, when he said: "We have obtained control—we have assumed, with it, a great and serious responsibility. . . . Do not imagine that we are going to use our power for selfish ends. Let it be our endeavour to lay the foundations of a permanent edifice, enduring until the farthest generations."

Parliament, which had adjourned in March after a short Session, reassembled in the middle of June. Almost immediately a motion by the late Sir G. Farrar, then leader of the Opposition, against the repatriation of the Chinese was introduced. There was a long and memorable discussion, but considerations of space will not allow me to give way to the temptation of describing it. General Smuts wound up the debate, as far as the Government side was concerned, and the opening portions of his speech are typical of his parliamentary manner. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick had charged the Government with discourtesy on a matter of procedure. "We, on this side of the House," replied the Minister, "are not very well versed in parliamentary procedure. We are

fresh to Parliamentary life, and it is to be expected that sometimes we will make mistakes, although in this case I will not admit that a mistake has been made. . . . Neither in intention nor in any other way shall we be discourteous to the leader of the Opposition. We know the difficulties he has to contend with. We shall not, by being discourteous, undermine his authority and make his position more difficult with those ambitious and mutinous lieutenants who surround him."

After this preliminary bow and thrust he gradually warmed up to his work. The atmosphere had been a heated one throughout the debate. Interjections had the effect of exciting the speaker, and at one stage he spoke of the "dirty work" performed by one of the Progressives. The member referred to jumped up to protest; General Beyers, who made a most excellent Speaker, asked the Minister to withdraw, which he did at once. He proceeded to inform the Opposition that "it was inevitable that the Chinese should go, and go finally. It was best to face that policy. The Government would do its utmost to enable the mining industry to get over the difficulties. They would not shirk their responsibility." He reminded the Rand men that, as a matter of fact, the Government had already, during the strike, incurred "the displeasure of a large section of the community" because it chose to do its duty by the mines. And he further reminded them that the Progressives were at one time an enormous party. "Where is that party now? They have lost their army, though I see before me here to-night the great generals of the Progressive party."

Once more it must be observed, at the risk of wearisome repetition, that such a clear and final statement concerning the Chinese was much more significant at the moment than it can appear to us now. The future of the Transvaal, nay of South Africa, was at stake. Nearly all the experts had stated over and over again—and they had accompanied their warnings by the most gloomy and impressive prognostications—that repatriation would mean blank ruin.

They had bidden the Government pause ; had accused it of bargaining away the best interests of the country to the Liberal party in England ; had attempted to bully it, cajole it, intimidate it, talk it off its legs, frighten it by a display of colossal sound and fury. The Government had its own theory, but that, after all, was no more than a theory. What if it failed to stand the test of actual practice ? There would have been every excuse for the stoutest hearts had they quavered and wavered, especially with a sense of inexperience to discourage them. But the Government stood firm, and General Smuts, as we have seen, was selected to utter the last word. As a British statesman had done before him, he "locked, bolted, and barred" the door, the result being that the Transvaal household was not again troubled by the atmospheric disturbances that had marked the first weeks of the Session.

To what extent the air had been cleared became apparent four days after when General Smuts, amidst general applause, moved the second reading of his Education Bill. He had a big subject, and the speech was one of the longest he ever made, brimful of information, and laying down bed-rock principles of policy as well as particulars of administration. One of the pillars of the new system was to be language equality. "It might have been better," he remarked, "and he certainly thought it would have been better, if they had had only one language, but they must deal with facts and find a solution." On the question of religion he said : "I have been urgently pressed not to have religion taught in the schools at all, and there is a lot of argument in that, but, the people of the country being what they are, it is impossible. This is a Christian country. Nine-tenths of the population are Christian, and wish their children to be educated in a Christian manner. Consequently it has been laid down that simple, undenominational Christianity shall be the basis of religious teaching. . . . If dogmatic religion is to be taught, the school is not the place for it. There is the church, and there are other places. . . . It is not the business of the

State to further the opinions of any sect. . . . The opening is left to parents to ask that no religious instruction at all shall be given. . . . No clergyman will be allowed to come into the schools. . . . There are different opinions. . . . We agree to differ, but the purpose is that the educational system of the country shall not be run by the Churches."

The Bill was accepted, with very little reservation, by the Opposition, whereas only a short while before there had been an outburst of spleen in the Rand papers on the subject of an Education Minute by Lord Selborne, in which His Excellency foreshadowed the tuition of more Dutch in the primary schools; that is what General Smuts' "language equality" meant in practice, for there had been little Dutch taught up till then. Members of Parliament representing country districts were not entirely satisfied, any more than were the Progressives. General Schalk Burger, for instance, said that he would waive his objections for the sake of unanimity. The *Rand Daily Mail* considered that General Smuts, "by a really wonderful exhibition of the art of compromise, has produced an Education Bill which is as warmly applauded by the Opposition as by his own supporters. He has done so by an admirable combination of diplomacy and firmness. Perhaps it would be still more true to say that he has triumphed by honest adherence to a high ideal."

The Bill became law, and it has stood the test of time exceedingly well, although both sections continue to grumble a little from time to time. It is only necessary to point to clerical influence in General Smuts' own party in order to show that the *Mail* was correct when it took its stand on the highest possible level in judging his policy, which included the refusal of the right of entry. On the question of language, too, he had to conquer opposition on his own side, because there was no absolute equality—"equality of compulsion," as it has since been called. Dutch children were compelled to learn both languages, but English children were not obliged to take

Dutch in the primary schools. Administrative difficulties, chiefly connected with questions of finance, there have been, but no one can deny that the Smuts Education Act was a consistent effort to attain the ideal of unity.

The Colonial Secretary's Department included so many sub-departments; there was so much work to be done in most of them; and General Smuts showed such zeal in attempting to get measures through in the first Session, that it would be travelling beyond the scope of this sketch if the merest outline of his work in 1907 were given. The part he played in Parliament was a revelation to those who had hitherto known him only as a soldier, a lawyer, a party organizer. His capacity for constructive statesmanship had full play; the thoroughness with which he treated questions submitted to him was patent to every observer. In a *Volkstem* "gallery note" I find the following: "The Minister showed a complete grasp of his subject. The Opposition having criticized the measure, he was able to go over the whole ground once more, his hands in his pockets, both literally and metaphorically. Oom Jannie has a way of dealing with a complicated matter as if it were the simplest thing on earth. Casual listeners might imagine that no more than a pipeful of tobacco was at issue."

The Johannesburg *Sunday Times* made him say, in its clever series of articles entitled "Things they Say in their Sleep": "To all intents and purposes, I am the Ministry, 'the whole team and the little yaller dog under the waggon,' as I believe they say in the States. I am a modest man, sir. Not so modest as I look, of course, but still modest enough, as modesty goes in this country." Playful allusions of this sort, and the exaggeration that appears to be natural even to many serious publicists, spread the impression that General Smuts was the be-all and end-all of the Transvaal Cabinet. This was an injustice to some of his colleagues, at any rate, but he certainly worked extremely hard. At that time no one would have thought that he could have kept at this high pressure for so many years. There were always his departmental as well as parliamentary duties

to be performed. Moreover, although he was not formally in charge of procedure, he might usually be seen at the end of a sitting ambling up to the Table in order to arrange the next day's Order Paper with the Clerk, Mr. G. R. Hofmeyr, to whose experience and strenuous work the smooth running of our parliamentary machine was largely due. There were no parliamentary under-secretaries in the Transvaal (nor are there now in the Union), and the heterogeneous nature of the anti-Progressive majority in the Assembly contributed to rendering the Government's task unenviable.

In the Upper House the Cabinet was never sure of a majority, but it was not long before circumstances—one of which was probably clever management on the part of Ministers—created vacancies. These were filled by the nomination of two Government supporters, namely, Advocates Esselen and Greenlees, both of whom have been mentioned in previous chapters. They proved independent enough to cause a Government defeat on a (minor) Bill. At the time, however, it was thought that their appointment definitely ended the condition of unstable senatorial equilibrium, which appears to have been included, if only tacitly, in the compromise preceding the 1907 elections. The Legislative Council was constituted by the Governor on his own responsibility, and evidently in order to neutralize to a certain extent the political complexion of the Assembly. For, though His Excellency was no doubt guided by the wishes of various party leaders, the original nominations were not made known until after the chief election results for the Assembly had been published. There is a story, which is related here for what it is worth, to the effect that when the two vacancies referred to had to be filled, it was General Smuts who had to submit the new names to Lord Selborne, and that the Governor at first refused point-blank to give his signature. It was only after some time had elapsed, and warm constitutional argument had passed to and fro, that confirmation was obtained by an obdurate Minister. I have never had the courage—some

people might give it a different name—to ask General Smuts whether the tale is true; if I had, he would very likely not have answered.

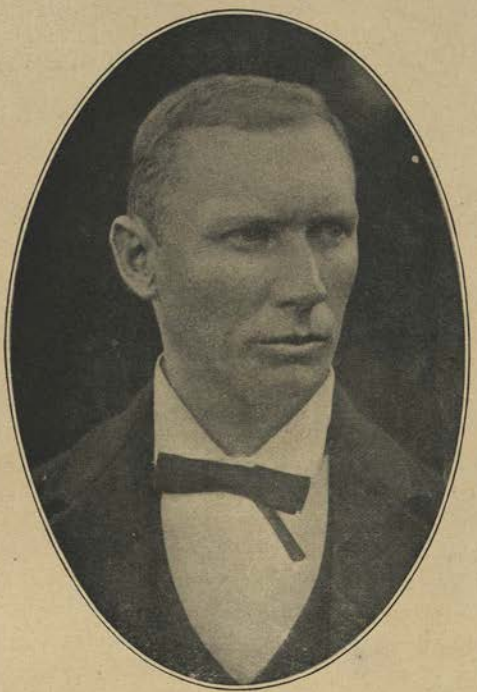
In August 1907 began the first real conflict between General Smuts and an opponent whom he has never been able to vanquish. That, at least, is the opinion of many of us, and the opponent was "Sammy," as he is called in South Africa: the British Indian. The Colonial Secretary wrote to Advocate Gandhi, the Indians' spokesman, to say "that he would carry out the law, and if the Indians resisted, they would only have themselves and their leaders to blame for the consequences." "Sammy" simply smiled his exasperating, inscrutable smile, and refused to budge, although General Smuts had the almost undivided support of the white community, as well as such leisure as the recess was able to confer on him. The Johannesburg *Star* remarked, as the "innocents" were slaughtered and the Session came to an end: "Practically the whole of the Government business has fallen to Mr. Smuts, who dominates and overshadows his party. Opinions may differ about the value of his achievements in practical legislation . . . but it would be churlish to refuse to recognize the colossal industry and persuasive tact which the Colonial Secretary has almost always brought to his parliamentary duties. We can only ascribe the superficiality and petulance of the last two days . . . to collapse and an almost intolerable strain. He obviously shares the complete control of the Cabinet with the Prime Minister, whose comparative effacement in Parliament is inevitable and partly linguistic." The reference to "petulance" was evidently connected with General Smuts' share in the debate on the presentation of the Cullinan Diamond (found in the Premier Mine, near the township of Cullinan) to the King. It was the day preceding the prorogation. Here was a Gilbertian situation once more. On the one side a party composed chiefly of Boers (in spite of General Smuts' appeals to the British electorate) offering the world's largest gem to the Imperial Crown as a token of gratitude and loyalty. On the other,

the party that never tired of flag-wagging, opposing the gift for various, more or less genuine, reasons. One of the Progressive whips, Mr. Henry Lindsay, spoke and voted against his party. The Colonial Secretary made a trenchant speech in which he emphasized the hollowness of some of the arguments adduced against the proposal. He also laid stress on his own policy of uniting the races. Perhaps the severity of his words constituted the *Star's* chief grievance against him, but it cannot be denied that occasionally during the Session his temper had shown signs of becoming frayed at the edges. He did not always give full and frank answers to questions put by his own supporters, on the Estimates for instance. I can remember a confidential remark by one of the humbler amongst them—who has since attained to prominence—which was anything but flattering to the Minister's parliamentary manner. How well, on the whole, he came through the fierce test of his first Session is proved, however, by the Opposition organ's remarks. The amount of work he had undertaken was reflected in cartoons, showing a "one-man" Cabinet in which all, or most, of the Ministers round the table had the face of General Smuts.

It may be mentioned here that, although South Africa has been fortunate in possessing some brilliant cartoonists, few of them have been able to draw General Smuts' likeness closely enough to suffice for a good caricature. There seems to be something in the glint of the eye, the shape of the nose, that baffles them. They have done their best to seize the elusive quality of blandness, alternating with a fierce expression when the subject is roused, but it cannot be said that they have succeeded. Many of the Smuts cartoons are simply ridiculous, regarded as works of art. Mr. A. W. Lloyd, who at one time or another has worked for the *Rand Daily Mail*, *Sunday Times*, *Cape Argus*, and *Sunday Post*, frequently came very near perfection. Mr. Holland, who served the Johannesburg *Star* during a busy period in our political history, also did some good work on the Smuts features. Mr. Boonzaier, who is still with

us, has carried characterization to a fine art in some of his cartoons of Transvaal public men, but General Smuts is entitled to nurse a standing grudge against him. Especially of late, and in the Nationalist papers, General Smuts has developed under Mr. Boonzaier's hands into an essentially callow, dissipated-looking youth, prematurely aged and with sloping forehead. These details are not in accordance with either merely physical or higher, artistic truth. Nor do all the photographs one sees published convey an accurate impression of General Smuts. It may be that he is too fair of complexion and hair to please the sensitive plate. Many of his portraits might be called "libellous." Others are frankly impossible, and nothing else. There is a third category, too. Even during this War of the Nations, in which he has taken so striking a part, well-known illustrated papers in England have offered his "likeness" to their readers, when in reality it was General Tobias Smuts, M.L.A., who had sat to the photographer! During the Boer War, the name of Jan Smuts was affixed to some illustrations evidently drawn by highly imaginative artists, who had never beheld the traits they were expected to delineate. An excellent photograph was taken shortly before the Boer War by an amateur, Mr. Leo Weinthal, then of Pretoria, now manager in London of the *African World*. Its only fault is a slight over development of the seriousness in the Transvaal State Attorney's face, giving it an appearance of age combined with subdued ferocity. This was partly due to the fact that overwork and the cares of office had affected his health and hollowed his cheeks.

In September 1907 the Colonial Secretary spoke at Germiston, reviewing the work of the Session, and incidentally hitting off one of his chief characteristics, when he said: "We have not done so badly. We have shown the velvet glove, but the iron hand was inside, and will always remain there (laughter). The country is grateful to the Opposition for the conciliatory spirit they have shown. The Government are free agents and determined



GENERAL SMUTS, TAKEN AT PRETORIA SHORTLY BEFORE THE BOER WAR.

From photograph by Leo Weinthal.

to continue as such." In connection with the Cullinan controversy, he gave it as his opinion that "if ever a body of men made a blunder that almost amounted to a crime, it was the Progressives." The last sentence was in a high degree prophetic, because the disintegration of the Progressive (Unionist) party in the Transvaal certainly began with the memorable division on the great diamond. No one can say where that party would have stood after the 1915 election, had it not been for the war. Het Volk gained many adherents and sympathizers in the opposite camp, thanks to the remarkable way in which General Smuts and his colleagues crystallized—the word applies in a peculiarly literal fashion—their conciliation policy in 1907. On the other hand, and for that very reason, opposition and suspicion now began to stir among the General's own immediate supporters. Some of them thought that this was carrying both brilliance and broadness too far. It is not too much to maintain that from the latent dissatisfaction engendered by the Cullinan gift, the Nationalist movement sprang into life.

IX

CULLINAN TO DURBAN

MR. HENRY LINDSAY had stated in the Transvaal Assembly, on the motion for the disposal of the Cullinan Diamond, that the great event for which he had been waiting all his life had at last materialized: an act that symbolized the junction of the two races in their common allegiance. The seed of a wider national sentiment, sown by Advocate Smuts at Kimberley in 1895 as an indispensable factor for the realization of political union, had germinated. General Smuts would not have been the man of action we know him to be if he had procrastinated, and had not attempted to set in motion without delay the machinery necessary for that political union. At a South African Agricultural Congress, held at Pretoria in October 1907, he foreshadowed coming developments in this direction. Barely half a year had gone by since the Transvaal Government had taken office!

In the same month he told his constituents that the Education Act was "bound to bring people together. In another ten or fifteen years there would be no racial differences. The wall that had separated them thus far had proved to be artificial, and a good kick had brought it down. Every one was welcome in this country. The Government and their party looked upon the newcomers as brothers, and would gladly take them into the rank and file of Afrikanders."

It is easy to be wise after the event, and at this stage

the fact that the Minister's pronouncement on the race question was altogether too sanguine needs no comment. The optimism is remarkable if we take into consideration the fact that the Asiatic cloud was beginning to loom large. "Sammy" had been told once again that he must register in accordance with the law passed early that year, and that no extra time would be given. In spite of this warning, the Colonial Secretary was induced by the trend of circumstances to give his friend from India another month—a concession that must have gone very much against his grain. But he was in a conciliatory frame of mind. In November he welcomed back to the Transvaal Mr. (now Sir) Lionel Phillips as an authority on mining matters who could help the country along. This showed broad-mindedness, for the newspapers controlled by the house of Eckstein, of which Mr. Phillips was the local head, had played an important part in the anti-Het Volk election campaign. As a further earnest of the Minister's intention to let bygones be bygones, he delivered a speech at the Johannesburg Parliamentary Debating Society dinner that same month. He recognized the intellectual stimulus provided by such societies. They gave their members, he said, a moral education. They taught young men to fight for their views to the uttermost, and to cave in gracefully when they were beaten. "The whole secret of the wise man was that he learned to bow to the inevitable. . . . It was a weakness in South Africa that they paid too little attention to eloquence. If a man were eloquent, he was considered a windbag (laughter). He was sorry to say that in the history of South Africa some colour had been lent to that view. The men who had left the deepest traces on the history of South Africa were Mr. Cecil Rhodes and President Kruger. Neither of them could speak. . . . But let them not be misled by that: a great personality always made its way, in spite of all impediments. Let them not think that, because Rhodes and Kruger succeeded without eloquence, eloquence was to be discounted, and that they had to speak uncouthly."

I must interrupt the speaker here for the purpose of stating that recently he confided to me his opinion that "talkers were seldom doers." Of course, no one confuses eloquence with prolixity. The two are often diametrically opposed; but at the banquet in question, General Smuts was evidently thinking of the more old-fashioned, sustained kind of oratory when he advocated the claims of eloquence. Subsequently, no doubt, hard experience converted him to the view of "least said, soonest mended," and of late years the occasions on which he held his counsel have become almost as notable as those on which he gave it. Nowadays, he rarely speaks, even in Parliament, except when there is direct necessity. He seems to avoid systematically the miscellaneous public appearances that were welcome to him in the first period of his active statesmanship, when dynamic thought was straining at the leash. He is still listened to with the same attention, for his powers as a speaker have not declined. He has the command of that unhackneyed vitality of phrase which is the gift needed above all others by public orators if they would hold their audiences. Possibly, age has made him slightly more cynical; he certainly appears in his maturity to misprise verbiage, even when it is pleasant to the ear. Unkind critics say of him that, whenever nowadays he uses many words, it is because he has little to say. But it is time to return to his Johannesburg speech.

"He was afraid," he continued, "that there was amongst them a tendency to look too much to the grave, to the ghosts of racialism and sectionalism that had dominated this country in the past. Let them avoid that. He was not speaking of one race only . . . . In Canada they had English and French together. They did not blend; they did not become one people. They remained almost like *two streams*, flowing parallel. It was the universal aspiration in South Africa that that state of affairs should not continue here."

The speaker was carried away by his own buoyancy when he described this state of feeling as universal. At Nylstroom,

in October 1912, General Hertzog—who was then General Smuts' colleague—chose the very metaphor of the two streams, but in order to spread the doctrine that they should indeed continue to run parallel in South Africa, and that blending ought to be avoided.

General Smuts did not confine himself to pious platitudes. He gave reasons and recognized difficulties: "Two such peoples as the Boers and the English must either unite or try to exterminate each other. The past, the present, the future pointed to but one road of salvation, and that was the road to Union. If they formed a South African nation, nothing was too great or too glorious for the country. They should have no ambition but the noblest and highest, of sinking all that was selfish. He did not say they would succeed at once, because it would take time. They would find that people who embraced this ideal would fall sometimes. They should bear with each other's faults, judging a man not by small things but by his highest strivings, by the whole bend of his character and aims. South Africa's strength lay, not in its material prosperity but in its men."

That he practised what he preached was shown by his decision, announced the same evening, to retain the name of the Imperial Light Horse, the crack regiment that had fought against the Boers and was now threatened with absorption into a unit, predestined by a prosaic Defence Act to bear a colourless name. More than that, he welcomed, at a meeting with his constituents, the tone of the Opposition leader's recess oratory. He was not inclined to swallow Opposition talk wholesale, however, for he chided Sir Percy Fitzpatrick for "everlastingly talking about equal rights and other dead issues." Sir Percy, he maintained, showed an inability to reconcile himself to the facts of history, and had accused the Government of being hostile to the mining interest. If ever a Government were to arise that deserved the accusation, said General Smuts, it should be "kicked out as soon as possible."

In December 1907 he addressed the Normal College students at Pretoria, praising knowledge, but chiefly as a

means for the development of character, which was to be the country's mainstay in the future. The examination mania was mercilessly attacked; he pleaded for thoroughness, as opposed to mere brilliancy. His frankness was marked, because as Minister for Education he had to admit that the teachers, on the whole, were poorly paid. Nor did he hold out brilliant prospects to the profession. He warned them that they would probably reap disappointment, bitterness, ingratitude; they should not aspire to wealth or fame, but securely and quietly lay the foundations on which the nation was to be built; and there was more idealistic advice to the same effect. In the same month, the same Minister went to the Western Transvaal, where he gave his farmer audiences practical hints on mealie-growing, potato-blight, the production of negro-head tobacco, sheep-shearing, the most profitable system of marketing, and matters of this sort. There is no record of what the farmers *thought*. What they *said* in reply, was that they wanted protection so as to obtain a good home market. But here they found the Minister unsympathetic. He was not going, he said, to erect a ring-fence round the Transvaal with the object of excluding fellow-South Africans. This decision might have been anticipated, for the protection asked for was chiefly against Cape competition, and the Union movement could hardly have prospered if such an innovation had been carried.

Meanwhile, the Indian did not cease from troubling, and no Colonial Secretary worth his salt could possibly have been at rest. There is no resistance so stubborn as passive resistance, no success so thorough as an unostentatious success. The tug-of-war with "Sammy" caused Smuts infinite embarrassment, which was caricatured with delightful humour by Mr. A. W. Lloyd. Advocate Gandhi asked for an interview in order that misunderstandings might be removed. He professed his willingness to co-operate, but General Smuts had presumably had too much of this "co-operation," and clearly showed that he had for once lost his temper. On the 9th of January 1908

the sorely tried Minister wrote that "he was not conscious of any misunderstanding on his part in reference to the Act; and had nothing to add to the statement made. . . . He was therefore not aware that any useful purpose would be served at that stage by the proposed interview."

In the same straightforward fashion he made a speech to indigent squatters on a portion of the Pretoria Town Lands that bore the picturesque appellation of Donkey Camp. These men asked for the title to "their" ground, but General Smuts upbraided them, adding that the old Boer Government had made a mistake in granting *erven* to poor whites, who were unable to make a living in the towns. In another Pretoria suburb he repeated his determination not to help indiscriminately, as he had to steer clear of the pauperization of the people. He also took the opportunity of warning Natal against the consequences of its Indian policy. Natal, a hypersensitive little body at any time, resented this intrusion, although more enlightened opinion was on his side. Almost simultaneously, he chose the better part of valour, and held out the hand of compromise to Mr. Gandhi. It was now the Transvaal's turn for criticism. In the course of a speech justifying his indulgent action, the Minister pointed out that he could hardly gaol all the Indians, which was the only practical alternative to a settlement. He maintained that it was a physical as well as a moral impossibility. "When one made a mistake, the sooner one climbed down the better; so he for one did not object. The man who could not climb down was a very small and contemptible man." This utterance was in keeping with the Johannesburg remark about the wise man's secret; it explains the ease with which General Smuts has sometimes accepted a position in which one would have thought, judging from previous opposition, that he could never have consented to stand. But it is, after all, no more than a general South African characteristic—in spite of occasional aberrations—that the people are saved by their common sense from kicking against the pricks, and in this, too, General Smuts is a child of his race.

In February 1908, at Johannesburg, the Colonial Secretary paid a glowing tribute to Colonel Briggs, who had fought against him in the Boer War. In the Western Transvaal, during the same month, he showed that, if he was able to appreciate an erstwhile enemy, neither did he forget his whilom comrades. The clamour for protection, which by this time was becoming strong and insistent, was met by him in no uncertain manner. He warned his hearers against isolation, separatism, protectionism; the Free Staters and many inhabitants of Cape Colony, he reminded them, had helped the Transvaal in the war. Were the Transvaalers now going to bite the hand that had drawn the sword in their defence?

At about the same time there was an interesting meeting at Christiana, where the diamond river diggings were in full swing, creating highly undesirable social conditions, especially among the rural Afrikanders who came from far and near to look for what was, at best, a precarious living. The Minister denounced their activities as pure gambling and advised them to take advantage of the opportunity of obtaining irrigated farming plots of ground near the town. There was much heckling. One of the audience asked what had been done for the Cape rebels, who had joined the Boers. He retorted by asking his questioner what had been done (financially) for any one else. A burgher took up the challenge by maintaining that General De la Rey, during the war, had "guaranteed those fighting under him a living." "Nonsense," the Minister replied amidst general hilarity, "what he guaranteed you was certain death."

Christiana is one of the warmest spots in the Union, enjoying a taste of the Kalahari climate. The meeting had begun at about 10 a.m. in the open, and was dragging its weary length along. The sun was creeping round a once friendly wall that was no longer able to afford shelter. Also, the lunch hour was drawing nigh. General Smuts showed signs of becoming restive under the continued heckling, when an inoffensive-looking but very pertina-

cious person commenced a dialogue, somewhat on these lines :—

Q. The Minister says we should not wash diamondiferous gravel, but rather till the soil ; does he know what is required in addition to land and water ?

A. Seed.

Q. And when we have the seed ?

A. A plough.

Q. And when the plough has been obtained ?

A. A harrow.

Q. Ay, ay, but does not General Smuts know what is wanted over and above all these things ? (The man meant that Government should provide oxen to help in cultivating the land.)

A. Sweat !

There was Homeric laughter ; the meeting did not last very long after that, but I am bound to confess that, although I was one of those who did not relish a grilling in the Christiana sun while lunch was waiting, I felt sorry for the poor fellow. It is quite exceptional for General Smuts to clothe his repartee in anything that may be considered coarse or offensive language, but occasionally cross-examination becomes tiresome, and some tenacious amateur politicians will not desist until they are rudely shaken off.

In March 1908 a large meeting was held at Johannesburg for the discussion of unemployment, which was assuming terribly serious dimensions. The forwards placed their trust in an all-white labour policy, but General Smuts' early enthusiasm in the same direction had by this time been sensibly damped by unpleasant experience and close propinquity to a severely practical colleague in the shape of Mr. H. C. Hull, the Treasurer of the Transvaal. "The whole economic state of South Africa," the Colonial Secretary remarked, "has been built on the foundation of coloured labour. It may be a rotten foundation—I am not defending it—but in trying to undermine it, we must proceed cautiously, as practical men, not taking anything away until

a substitute has been found. The question is too large a one for the Government to tackle. We have to work for a change in social opinion."

Looking back on the events of those years, I am afraid it must be admitted that we cannot claim to be alert in South Africa, for in spite of all the plain forecasts given by General Smuts and others, the man in the street had no inkling that Union was so near. Again and again the Colonial Secretary referred to the subject, but if any one took serious notice of his prognostications it was generally in order to conclude that Smuts was a very sanguine man and fond of anticipations. At Port Elizabeth, in March 1908, he said: "We are on the eve of great events. There is a lot of talk about unification, and although most of it is mere smoke, where smoke is seen there must be a fire burning. It is only in unity that the road to salvation is to be found." A little later, Mr. Merriman endorsed these remarks in the same town, adding that "General Smuts would play a great part in the future of South Africa."

While thus engaged on spade-work, the Colonial Secretary could on rare occasions find time for relaxation. In April 1908, at Pretoria, a Dutch theatrical society gave evidence of high aims by producing the classical drama "Medea." It is interesting to recall that Mr. H. Oost, who was General De Wet's secretary during the 1914 rebellion, took the part of Jason, and took it with a vigour that was both characteristic and prophetic. General Smuts, who was present by invitation, spoke a few words of encouragement. "We must all do our best," he remarked, "for the extension of the field of art. No nation exists for the sake of material well-being only; intellectual and artistic effort are required. It is true that we cannot yet boast a Shakespeare, a Euripides, but that could hardly be expected, because we have only just begun."

On the 16th of May, at a Johannesburg Cornish dinner, he returned to the charge on which his thoughts had been so much bent of late. There had been a change of Government in the Cape. Mr. Merriman had succeeded Dr.

(afterwards Sir Starr) Jameson. In Natal a sympathetic Cabinet was in power. The moment for concerted action had come, and General Smuts' "smoke", of two months before proved to be due to a very warm fire indeed. We had entered upon a new epoch, he declared; a historian had said that true greatness consisted, not in not sinning, but in rising superior to sin. This had applied in South Africa, which had shown marvellous elasticity, unexpected resiliency. The peaceful relations between the two races showed a moral ascendancy, a power of moral recuperation, that was the very best asset we could have. It had been asked, "Why must we unite? Why cannot we make agreements, pool railway and customs, and so on?" His answer was: "The time for that sort of thing is past. No more patchwork arrangements! There is no alternative to Union except Separatism. We must go the whole hog, one way or another."

He went into great detail, and even announced that there would be no general election on the subject. Existing parliaments could do all that was required. He felt that, with three Dutch Governments in power, communities like the Rand might be suspicious, but he adjured them to cast any feeling of that sort from them. After all, what was Het Volk? What was the Bond? They would pass away, but a Constitution would materialize that would last a hundred or two hundred years. There was only one basis on which enduring human institutions could be built up: that of fairness, justice, reasonableness. "Let us not approach this matter in a huckstering spirit, as though we were busy with a Kaffir bargain. Let us go with a large mind. The Governments ought to agree with the Oppositions as to the representation of all parties to the Convention. . . . This Constitution is going to be more than a mere instrument of government. It ought to be a grand pact of union and peace between the white people of South Africa. Do not let us have a Union of top-dog and under-dog. Let us have a union of brothers."

He added that he could already see "the weak knees

appearing. People are getting frightened ; they are faltering and wavering. But we cannot draw back." As a matter of fact, the Transvaal Unionist Press showed not a little reserve in judging this pronouncement, whilst in Natal (which was very nervous) there was outspoken criticism. But in the end the lines on which General Smuts desired the Convention to be constituted prevailed, and the Oppositions in the four Colonies went in whole-heartedly with the respective Governments. The leaders of English-speaking South Africans may claim a full share of the credit for the accomplishment of Union.

Later in the same month, Smuts addressed his constituents, again drawing attention to the "friction and waste as between the different Colonies. So long as the people were ground down by taxation, they would be a starved people and would never reach the high destinies before them. What was the use of all those *tin-pot shows* in South Africa? Let them do their best to start a Union to rule the country from Table Bay *to the Congo, and even beyond* that." He who ran might read, but, incredible though it may seem, tens of thousands of voters who were consistently supporting General Smuts at this time could hardly find a name bad enough for him, when in the course of years he showed that these were not mere words—that he intended a genuine pact of peace between English and Dutch, and that not only the Limpopo but even the Zambesi failed to represent his Ultima Thule. Of course, such great ambitions cannot be realized with small means, and it was perhaps unfortunate that General Smuts' 1908 optimism led him to imply substantial reductions in expenditure. For of all the "might-have-beens" that have tended to sadden our hearts since Union, the reduction of financial burdens is one of the saddest.

The Cornish speech suffered the fate of some of his earlier orations by being misreported in an important particular. As an argument in favour of Union he had urged that no one could foretell what the centuries would bring us. In 1908, he said, the different Colonies were safe

under the British Flag, but who could say whether that safety would endure? It were better to band together and form one strong community. This passage was cabled to London by one or two correspondents as if he had prophesied that the British Flag would no longer fly over South Africa in a hundred years' time. The usual controversy arose. Fortunately, there were staunch Progressives, Sir L. Phillips among the number, who had heard him, and could correct the totally misleading version.

On the 23rd of June the Colonial Secretary spoke in the Transvaal Assembly on the Closer Union resolution. The speech occupied only forty-five minutes, but the newspapers gave four columns to it, which meant that it was reported verbatim—an honour that is "deservedly unusual" in South Africa. The *Rand Daily Mail* observed that "every sentence was weighty." For myself, I may perhaps add that the oration stands out clearly in my memory as an oasis with broad-leaved palms of thought and sparkling springs of speech in the dreary desert of long experience in listening to parliamentary talk. Hearty cheers greeted him as he rose to give voluminous practical advice, interspersed with terse political epigram. "We are always making history in the Transvaal," he said; "we are moving as rapidly as it is good for this country to move." This afterwards proved correct with a vengeance, and there were undercurrents of dissatisfaction at the rapidity of our movements even then. The few Labour men in the House and the more conservative among the Boer members had voiced their objections in the Lobby, even though they had not actively and clearly opposed Union in the country. General Smuts now analysed their grievances. It had been contended, he said, that unification was not the outcome of popular feeling, but neither in Canada nor in Australia had there been such a strong and steady popular opinion behind the movement as there was that day in South Africa.

Looking at the matter dispassionately after the lapse of eight years, the impartial observer perforce recognizes that,

even if there was no spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm either in 1908 or when Union actually came to pass, there certainly did exist in 1908 a remarkable spirit of *rapprochement*. Never before had the general South African sentiment been so strong, and if—as must be assumed—Union was bound to come at some time or another, the moment for its initiation was decidedly well chosen. Nevertheless, there were many thoughtful people who keenly realized the drawbacks, especially material ones, to the Transvaal. No doubt General Smuts saw these himself, but he was so carried away by his ardour that he minimized them, minimizing too the sullen, barely articulate opposition to the proposal. We now know that international considerations played an important part in convincing even such prominent South African statesmen as were fearful of the practical difficulties in the way of Union that the advantages would outweigh the drawbacks. General Smuts himself had indicated the international aspect of national affairs to the Cornish diners, but the average man looked upon such warnings as figments of the imagination, designed to push through a measure that was receiving no more than lukewarm, passive support in many quarters. This fact will give an idea of the political deadweight that General Smuts and others had to carry on their shoulders in their march onwards. His colossal faith and strength proved equal to the task. They even moved him to flights beyond the immediate possibilities of practical politics. He told the Transvaal Assembly, for instance, that it was necessary to "consider the economic factor." But to-day our fiscal policy is still a matter of temporary expedients and frequent changes. He warned his hearers that "the policy of drift on the native question meant chaos and ruin." But the Constitution did not even attempt to touch the fringe of that question, and to-day we have advanced only a little on the road towards a solution.

In the course of his fine exposition General Smuts dealt with the mighty resources of South Africa, asking himself the question what form of agreement between the con-

tracting parties was best calculated to develop them to the full. Mr. Jan Hofmeyr had allowed it to be understood that he held fast to the old ideal of federation, but General Smuts was not satisfied with that, and showed up its shortcomings: "What is wanted is a supreme, national authority to give expression to the national will, and the rest is really subordinate." "Forward," "forward," was his watchword—"progress," "expansion," "push along," "do not spend time on mere questions of machinery." His speech was, in fact, despite the analytical tone of part of it, a fervent appeal rather than an intellectual effort. "When we are young and inexperienced," the man of thirty-eight concluded, "we think that intellect solves world problems, but as we get older we see that, while intellect does much, it is really the spirit of union, of friendship, of comradeship among men, that forms the strongest impelling force. If we wish to solve our problems, let us avail ourselves of this tremendous force of South African patriotism and South African comradeship. And the sooner the better, Mr. Speaker."

The motion was agreed to. Smuts had mounted another rung on the ladder of fame. But some there were who, urged perhaps by political bias, by envy, or by a riotous sense of humour that sought relief from the strain of terrible earnestness, were bent on striking another note. For curiosity's sake I reproduce here the text of a skit that appeared about this time in a Progressive newspaper:—

JANNIE

Jannie is for South Africa
One and great and free;
"But," he says, "if you want it so,
You must leave it all to me"

Jannie's too big for heaven,
So at the Last Trump's sound
They'll clear a space in a suitable place,
A special shrine to found—

Panelled and tiled with statesmen,
The great of bygone days,
And Jannie will tread on the glorious dead,
And we shall sing his praise.

Jannie will take the top note,
The rest won't sing for nuts,
But you never can tell, he may end in . . . well,
Jannie may end in Smuts!

Fortunately, buffoonery of this kind was rare, and throughout South Africa it began to be understood that one of the principal assets in the coming Union was the Colonial Secretary of the Transvaal. When the Session, to which the Closer Union resolution formed the prelude, had run its course, and a number of important Acts had been added to the Statute-book, the *Rand Daily Mail* gallery man wrote: "It was distinctly a Smuts Session. . . . More and more has General Botha left the important work to his right-hand man. Now and then it was obvious that his nerves had suffered, but as a rule he was reasonable and even-tempered. Moreover, he was always vigilant, and always ready with a suggestion in cases of emergency."

Lest too much sweetness should cloy, there was in August a recrudescence of the Asiatic trouble, but the Colonial Secretary found time to attend many public meetings, at which he spoke in furtherance of the Union idea. His words expressed reassurance and hopefulness in order to put at rest the minds of those who were perturbed at the prospect of the Transvaal merging its identity in that of its poor relations. He also made his voice heard at a School Board Conference, held in Pretoria. Difficulties had arisen in the working of the Education Act that bore his name. Town and country—which practically means English and Dutch—could not see eye to eye on all questions, and he urged them to look for a solution in the spirit of compromise, especially on the language question. They could not force any one to learn a language, he said, and if they could use force, they would not attain their real object. The result of the option allowed by

the Act was that nearly all the children were learning Dutch. . . . It was in the interests of both English and Dutch, in the interests of South Africa, that their children should know both languages. That would assist the growth of a larger and wider spirit of toleration. That was what we required above all in the Transvaal of to-day.

On the 12th of October 1908, exactly nine years after the beginning of the Boer War, the National Convention opened its sittings in Durban. Five days before, General Smuts had found time to make, on behalf of a committee, a presentation to Miss Hobhouse at Pretoria; in glowing terms he eulogized her self-sacrificing services in the cause of the physical and national regeneration of the Boer people after the war. If it was merely a coincidence that this brave Englishwoman was publicly honoured on the eve of this great event in the future capital of the Union, for her work on behalf of the other race, it was certainly a chronological arrangement that could not have been of happier omen, had it been deliberately brought about.

X

DURBAN TO "HEADQUARTERS"

THE National Convention was a true reflex of the national conglomeration. It was very largely a Parliament of incompatibles. The Rand mine-owner and the Cape brandy-farmer, the Free State stock-raiser and the Natal sugar-planter, had never been able to "hit it off." To place them in close juxtaposition seemed a risky proceeding. Personalities, too, were very much mixed. There you had the broad diapason of President Steyn's solemn, commanding presence; Mr. Merriman's flute-like tone—apt, at any time, to change into the piccolo's piercing shriek; Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's staccato notes; the bassoon-like quality of Sir Frederick Moor; General Botha's *vox humana*; the trombone of Dr. Smartt's delivery; the strangely strident oboe of General James Barry Munnik Hertzog; the celeste of Dr. Meiring Beck. And over all presided the genius of that contrapuntal artist, the late Lord De Villiers, who succeeded in blending weirdest sound effects into the more or less harmonious whole of South African *Zukunftmusik*.

As to General Smuts, I prefer to let others speak. Sir Edgar Walton, M.L.A., gives us a fine picture in his illuminating book *The Inner History of the National Convention*. It is well to remember that this volume appeared in 1912, before strikes, wars, and rebellions had contributed towards the establishment of a truce between Government and Opposition. Sir Edgar says: "He (Mr. Merriman) was

followed by General Smuts, to whom the Convention was deeply indebted through its sittings. General Smuts had made full use of the able staff which accompanied the Transvaal Ministers, and the information he was able from time to time to supply was of the utmost service. He himself had made a deep study of the question in all its details, and there seemed to be no aspect of the problem which he had not investigated with his habitual thoroughness. The clearness of his mind, too, was fortunately accompanied by a corresponding lucidity in expression, and after the opening days of the Convention there was no delegate who carried greater weight than General Smuts. In his opening sentences General Smuts appealed to the Convention not to allow their work to be spoiled by too much attention to material interests or difficulties of the day. Material interests, he urged, were evanescent, the problems of the future would not be the problems of to-day, and they were working for the future. . . . In the first place they must trust the people of South Africa, and trust each other. . . . They must also trust future South Africans . . . and they had no right to attempt to hamper them and bind them down by any cast-iron system or constitution which only a revolution could amend. . . ."

Considerations of space will not allow me to quote further from the speech, but a perusal of Sir Edgar Walton's book can be recommended; it is all the more interesting because the Convention sat behind closed doors. The historic meeting was afterwards adjourned, first to Cape Town and then to Bloemfontein. The qualities indicated by Sir Edgar, no less than Smuts' liberal ideas, his powers of persuasion and his intellectual gifts, strengthened and broadened by his intense feeling on the subject, impressed all the members, and were potent factors in bringing about the success of the Union movement in the teeth of formidable difficulties. Divergent interests had to be reconciled no less than divergent views. The Young Unionists, though not personally represented in the Convention, knew how to push their ultra-modern ideas; while

on the other hand there were the Conservatives to be reckoned with—men like Mr. Merriman, who openly confessed his distrust of "mischievous jim-jams," under which heading he brought the great bulk of innovations of any sort. Natal distrusted the Dutch. The Free State did not quite know whether it liked the English. The Cape was afraid of "Transvaal lines" in finance, and the Transvaal was not overfond of some of the more antiquated modes of Cape procedure. It was perhaps just as well that there were a few determined men, General Smuts among the number, who did not allow themselves to be deterred by even the greatest of difficulties. The question of Federalism versus Unionism proved in itself a serious obstacle, but in the end victory was snatched from defeat and a draft Constitution evolved. The Gordian knot of the colour question—and, it must be admitted, of the problem of definitions generally—had not been cut, but rather tied a little more securely. Only, the people of South Africa were now given the opportunity of a united attempt to unravel it, and the danger of complications, arising from four Colonies pulling the strands each in a different way, was removed. Language equality had been decided upon, and though a few minor amendments to the original Bill were made by Colonial Parliaments, final success was at last attained, thanks to the skilful piloting of the Act through the British Parliament.

Before this happy consummation, however, Generals Botha and Smuts, in February 1909, addressed the people of Pretoria on their Convention work. A certain amount of dissatisfaction and quibbling was in the air. Pretoria, besides being disappointed at the inconclusive settlement of the Capital question, was the centre of the protection, i.e. anti-Union, movement already referred to. General Botha had his Young-Turks even then, and part of the argument was in anticipation devoted to their objections. General Smuts considered that the most wonderful part of the Draft Constitution was the unanimity with which it had been signed by the Convention delegates. "I have

heard it said," he remarked, "that this great work is the result of the efforts of a few ambitious men. You have probably heard it stated that a small number of men, having their own ends to serve, have rushed this matter forward in the face both of public apathy and of public opposition. The fact to which I have referred is the most complete answer to that charge. . . . The Constitution is not a man's work. It bears the impress of a Higher Hand.[1] Woe to the man who puts himself against a United South Africa. . . . Forces have been growing below the surface of things. Within the last twenty years and more, silent forces have been transforming South Africa. There are points that go deeper than Constitution-making, because Constitutions are simply bits of paper. We want a stable Constitution, one that will stand and weather the storms that are sure to burst over South Africa. 'One master in South Africa'—that is the fundamental idea. There will be one supreme Parliament and one Government. If there is any crisis, there will be one arbiter, and that is the Central Parliament. . . . We had to establish a position of equality and fairness between the white races. This Constitution is more than its name conveys. It is the *final pact*, the final treaty of peace, between these races. If we want to bring about better relations between a proud people like the whites of South Africa, and bring about a condition of indissoluble union, we want absolute fairness and equality."

He pointed out that now there would be language equality, which had never existed; the thing had rankled, he said, and had always been an obstacle involving honour. He dealt with various other matters, emphasizing the fact that the Interior would have its due share of development; we could not follow Australia's example, and have almost the whole population concentrated at the coast, in a few very large towns. Note these words: "If any catastrophe

[1] Smuts' deep seriousness on the subject of Union may be gauged from the fact that he very rarely speaks in terms of theology, and that anything approaching unctuousness is foreign to his nature.

were to happen, the whole future of Australia would be jeopardized, and earthquakes nowadays take various forms." In view of the history of Admiral von Spee, this warning by General Smuts may be regarded as well founded, but perhaps he was thinking of other maritime nations, too, when he underlined the danger to Australia from its peculiar division of population.

His optimism led him to describe the clause concerning railway management as "the Magna Charta of the Interior." The phrase became a popular one, and is still remembered, but there are many staunch Government supporters who to-day would hesitate to affirm that General Smuts' expectation in this regard has been fully realized.

He laid stress on the supremacy of the Assembly over the Senate; and as he is often accused of unbending Toryism, this passage in the speech deserves more than passing notice, as does also the chastened frame of mind in which he announced that "the statesman is not yet born who could solve the native question in a way that would be safe for, and satisfactory to, all the people of South Africa." He concluded by urging his hearers to put the selfish point of view, the narrow Transvaal and Pretoria aspect, away from them. The appeal was not entirely successful, because the Young-Turks (prominent among whom was Advocate Tielman Roos, now Chairman of the Nationalist Party for the Transvaal) asked several hostile questions. But on the whole, the gathering was strongly in favour of Union, and was a great personal triumph for the two Generals. The Colonial Secretary followed this up by holding meetings with his constituents, at which he spoke in the same strain, railing against "narrow and exclusive views," and claiming that Transvaalers should "rise to the great occasion" as founders of a nation. He wanted a union that would "go into the bone and marrow of the people of South Africa." They were to cultivate the South African spirit and look at the Constitution as a whole.

There were many interruptions, particularly at Das-

poort, which is a Labour centre; but General Smuts dealt patiently with these, and secured a confirmation of his action, although the majority was occasionally a narrow one. In March he addressed a Congress of Closer Union Societies at Johannesburg. In the course of a long speech he defined the object as "the creation of a common fatherland, because there is no inspiration like this." At Potchefstroom, during the same month, he said: "A strong line has to be taken. My own line in public life has always been to go ahead, and not to ask what A says or what B says." At Randfontein he admitted that: "At Vereeniging we felt that the Peace Treaty was not the end of the trouble between Briton and Boer. We felt then, as I do now, that it is for the people of the country to sign a document of lasting peace and unity."

In the beginning of April 1909 he moved the acceptance of the draft Act of Union in the Transvaal Legislative Council. "We have been marking time," he complained; "now we want to progress. We must sweep away the existing machinery of government and establish new forms. About these you cannot argue theoretically; practical forces have to be considered. People think there will be enormous expansion after Union, and that the millennium will be at hand. Those people are going to be disappointed. . . . The progress of South Africa will naturally be slow. Union itself will not, in the immediate future, create any wonderful changes at all. . . . We are not going to establish Union in order to have a boom in South Africa. We have honestly tried to put the people on the right path for future development. Once on it, if they continue to travel on the right path—it may be a long one, from generation to generation—they will ultimately reach the end that Destiny has in store for them."

The throwing of a little cold water on the fevered brow of hope was not in any way a "work of supererogation" (as General Smuts might say), for millennial anticipations certainly existed, and they were almost exclusively of the material kind. In the same month, when opening the

new Pretoria College, the Minister showed that he was chiefly moving on other planes: "There are ideals of truth, justice, and honesty. Those are the virtues that go to make a true gentleman and a true Christian, and they are of infinitely greater importance than purely mental attainments. We all learn in life that character tells far more heavily in the struggle for existence than intellectual attainments." He encouraged the students to apply themselves to South African history, for this was a land of daring deeds and noble heroism, performed by all sections of the people. A monster had sown the seeds of discord and disunion, but a glorious future awaited South Africa if those seeds could be eradicated.

And then he left for England as one of the delegates appointed to see the "South Africa Act" through the Imperial Parliament. In London he spoke at the British Empire Club: "William of Orange became your best king—I am speaking of the dead—and, in due course, the father of responsible government in the United Kingdom. After centuries the great gift that he brought you has been returned to the descendants of the Dutch in another part of the world with compound interest." But he did not confine himself to South African affairs: "I hope more and more that the people of these islands will see that they must learn to defend themselves, and that, without becoming a military or aggressive Empire, which God forbid, they may yet train themselves for some contingency that may possibly arise." It can hardly be considered out of place if this advice is recalled now. He was particularly emphatic on the desire for peaceful development in the Dominions. "War would mean ruin and disaster to us. We want peace, and we participate in this conference in a spirit of peace and amity towards the rest of the world."

The conference referred to was in connection with Imperial Defence. In September, when he was returning to South Africa, he accorded Reuter a long interview at Southampton, in which he stated that the Imperial Government shared the desire of the Dominions for absolute

autonomy in military as well as in civil matters. In October he addressed the Rand Pioneers at Johannesburg. His words glowed with animation and colour. "The details of our lives," he reflected, "are often troublesome in their isolation, often sordid. We do not realize sufficiently that there is some nobler purpose, some deeper meaning, in it all. It is only when we come together on occasions like this, exchange ideas and cast a backward glance over the road travelled, that we see that the details are not so sordid, and the mistakes not so great; that there is something better and nobler, something divine at work, a great value in what has happened."

He reminded the Pioneers of the ideal of Kruger and of Rhodes, of a great country in the North; he spoke to them on the inspiring nature of South Africa's history. It was a country "full of distractions, but full, too, of achievements of which any man might be proud. Our self-respect, our national pride, will be one of our most valuable assets. It is a large land, with its clear sunshine in which no wrong can last long. It raises itself by force of nature. It goes its way rejoicing, in spite of the deepest depression through which it may have gone. . . . The great deeds of the years that have gone before will be topped by the still larger deeds of the future. . . . Let us keep the door open and welcome the young Pioneers, coming to fill up the future South Africa."

His vision was of a uniformly roseate hue, and he quoted a writer who had said that the oppressed Russian Jews would "become the Maimonides and the Spinozas of the future in South Africa." He also informed his hearers that he had told the Imperial Government of South Africa's intention "to look after its own defence against all comers. We said that we might not be able to send army corps to defend the Empire in other parts of the globe, as our position here is peculiar." The fundamental idea of the Constitution, he continued, was that South Africa was a white man's country. Party passion had to be laid aside, in order that the best hearts and minds of South Africa might be brought

together for the solution of the "enormous problems that lie ahead." These problems he indicated, quoting at the same time the late President Kruger's advice to his people to "take from the past all that was good and beautiful."

The Unionist organs applauded the speech, as far as it went, but were not satisfied, because they considered that it did not go nearly far enough. Speculation was rife as to whether there would be a Coalition Government in the Union, and it was generally taken for granted that the choice would rest with General Botha, whose majority was assured. The Colonial Secretary's utterance appeared to pave the way for Coalition, but there was nothing very definite, and so the Rand felt disappointed. The *Rand Daily Mail* also caricatured General Smuts' "discreet" way of attaining his "white South Africa."

When Mr. Jan Hofmeyr died, high on the mount whence the promised land unrolled itself at his feet, General Smuts contributed the following words to the memory of the one-time chief: "Kruger's imposing will-power was not his, nor yet the grand conception of a Rhodes, but Hofmeyr possessed greater subtlety of mind. He was a close student of history, and this enabled him to see the faults of other men. His own career was relatively free from error." He eulogized Hofmeyr's political integrity, his personal unselfishness, and the services he had rendered the deputation that took the new Constitution to England.

In November 1909 Smuts showed that his professional accomplishments did not tempt him to look down on commercial pursuits. At the University College, Johannesburg, he expressed the hope that "there would not be too many persons and lawyers, and that the people of South Africa would go in for business education, which required the severest training and attention. The temptation in South Africa, with its fine climate, was to be slipshod and do nothing. Boys and girls would have to learn discipline. When he had passed away, he hoped the people would remember kindly the interest he had taken in education. It was the basis of the future."

So far from worshipping professional status, he has always been suspected of hostility towards medical men as a body, and the *Transvaal Medical Journal* of December 1909 devoted some attention to this peculiarity. The *Journal* even hinted at unreasonableness on the Minister's part, stating that it refused to believe the shocking tales it had been told until further evidence was forthcoming. At a Medical Congress, held at Cape Town, Sir Kendal Franks, the well-known Johannesburg surgeon, attacked General Smuts on the same grounds; he was supported by Dr. W. T. F. Davies, D.S.O., now M.L.A. for Yeoville (Johannesburg). It is unnecessary to go into the grievances aired by these gentlemen, but it may be mentioned here that in Parliament the same charge has often been hurled at General Smuts' head. Though always concerned to refute it, and to prove his conciliatory intentions, he has seldom been successful, as far as the doctors themselves have been concerned. His efforts to pilot a Public Health Bill through Parliament have failed, and he has been told that his administrative actions as well as his legislative proposals constituted slights on a learned profession in favour of bureaucratic centralization of power. However much, or little, truth there may be in these assertions, he has undoubtedly shown many a time that he does not believe in papal infallibility, by whomsoever claimed, and that when doctors disagree, statesmen may feel inclined to take the bit into their own mouths, even when the course they have to run is a technical one.

At the end of January of the year of Union (1910), the Colonial Secretary spoke at a Krugersdorp banquet, held in celebration of the anniversary of the birthday of Robert Burns. In giving a review of the three years of self-government he would, he said, "speak with some impartiality, with a spirit of aloofness." He claimed that the misgivings about the British Government's liberality had been completely falsified, and praised the English wing of the Transvaal Government party for its co-operation. Three years before, it was generally thought the Government was

going to make a mess of things, and he was free to admit that he almost thought so himself." He then drew attention to the problems that had presented themselves for solution, and to the many different quarters from which pressure had been brought to bear on Ministers. At the time of the miners' strike in 1907 they had had to make up their minds quickly, right or wrong, and they had become accustomed to "seeing things through." They had proceeded drastically against the disturbers of the peace, but he thought they had earned the gratitude of the community in so doing. The Government killed the strike in its infancy, but it kept the men's families from starvation. And, the strike once over, they had passed a Conciliation Law which, he hoped, would prevent similar occurrences in the future.

This hope was destined to be dashed to the ground, but he was not far wrong when he told the Krugersdorp Caledonians that "the Transvaal was enjoying as much prosperity as was good for it, and perhaps a little more." In regard to the Civil Service reorganization, "there had been charges of favouritism and racialism, but it had been found that the Government had held the balance absolutely even." The Transvaal had more cash than it wanted, the rest of South Africa less. He was in favour, therefore, of sharing. He praised the Opposition's moderate attitude, adding that "Cæsar would soon be buried, and it is unnecessary to persecute him. I have not praised him, because I am more conscious of the Government's faults than perhaps any one present."

Based on this passage, but with a sly hit at the tenor of the whole of the speech, there appeared a Lloyd cartoon depicting the Minister in a toga as "Mark *Jan*-tony," who asks, in an aside: "But, between ourselves, don't you think Cæsar was an absolutely ripping kind of feller?"

Mr. Merriman had warned the Transvaal not to "ride the high horse." With his customary tolerance, General Smuts not only refused to take offence, but endorsed this warning at the banquet. The Transvaal was the youngest

of the South African family, he reasoned, and although it might be prosperous financially, there were other qualities gracing the older Colonies. A second warning was that they were "not to force things." This was a Smutsian euphemism for "No Coalition"! Natural forces, he said, would create the true dividing line between parties; meanwhile, efforts to abolish the existing ones must be regarded as due to impatience. But he fully recognized that "the present parties would not continue. The old cries and issues would become effete, and would soon be buried with Cæsar. Larger questions would dominate the political life of South Africa. There must always be an Opposition." This, too, was following in the footsteps of Mr. Merriman, who had answered a feeler by Dr. Jameson at Cape Town in a forcible speech, declaring that there were bound to be *pas-ops* (cautious, conservative politicians) and push-ons.

The Colonial Secretary proceeded to plead once more for an all-embracing South African spirit, so that a great country might be filled by a great people, with a "future among the greatest nations of the earth." Meanwhile, he hastened to pass what amounted to a prospective self-denying ordinance (and a very shrewd one at that!) by advising the first Union Government not to do much, but to wait for Parliament, for "the voice of the people."

There was not much of Burns, or of lyrical poetry, in the utterance. Yet, somehow, it received a great deal of attention, particularly that part of it which dealt with the vexed Coalition question. The *Rand Daily Mail*, haunted perhaps by the ghosts of some of its own pronouncements made in its unregenerate days, told its readers that, but three years previously, Smuts was "often described as the dangerous man in the Cabinet. He was credited with Machiavellian designs, and thought to be the personification of racial bitterness (!). To-day there are few who . . . are not ready to admit frankly that they were mistaken, and that he has brought to bear on all the difficult questions with which he has to deal a keen intellect, an impartial judgment, and a very real sense of patriotism." These

words are not quoted here in order to divert attention from the chagrin manifested by Progressive organs when the no-Coalition trump was sounded. On the 9th of February, at Middelburg (Transvaal), the Minister went so far as to advise the people of the Colony, and, "if he might, of South Africa," to be quiet, and to ponder the situation gravely. It did not matter who were going to govern, and what the policy would be in the *immediate future*. . . . Whatever policy the coming Union Government attempted should be non-racial. All the component parts should fuse into one great South African nation." This non-racial aspect of his policy he iterated and reiterated, emphasized and re-emphasized. The country, he pointed out, wanted, not a see-saw, but a real forward policy. Yet, once more, he discouraged any hopes of great prosperity immediately after Union. In fact, he thought there were dark days ahead.

And then he turned his attention to the veteran of the South once more. There had been negotiations regarding Coalition, and at Worcester (Cape) Mr. Merriman had made a speech in which he predicted that the old lines would prevail at the coming elections. He had even swung the tomahawk and provided his followers with a few battle-cries. The Worcester speech was practically a definite challenge to the Unionists and a notification, on behalf of the Cape Bond and the Orange Free State "Unie," to the effect that Coalition was "off." Mr. Merriman's tone had been radically different from the one adopted by General Smuts at Krugersdorp; it had acted as a powerful irritant, while the younger man was doing his best to apply emollients. General Smuts attempted at Middelburg to undo some of the harm accomplished. He compared the Worcester oration to a shot in the dark; expressed the hope that Mr. Merriman would not want to rake up the past and undo the work of co-operation; made allowances for him as a "vigorous old warrior," and asked the public not to take too much notice.

The *Rand Daily Mail* remarked that "Mr. Smuts undertook the work of the apologist with all the tact and dia-

lectical skill which makes him so valuable an asset to any political party. If his explanation is unconvincing, we may be sure that it is due to the weakness of the case rather than to lack of ability on the part of the advocate." The *Transvaal Leader* said that "Botha and Smuts, whatever else may have been wrong with their policy, have consistently striven to educate their followers up to a non-racial, liberal attitude." But the speculation as to coming party arrangements continued, and General Hertzog spoke at Reddersburg in support of Mr. Merriman's attitude; Mr. F. S. Malan addressed his Malmesbury constituents on the lines of General Smuts' advice. Mr. Merriman continued his campaign; while conciliatory towards General Smuts personally, he complained that "some Transvaal officials had come to the Cape to teach their grandmothers to suck eggs." And, invading the Karroo, he dealt with the coming Premiership by assuring his constituents that "Barkis was willin', but Barkis was a very shy man." On the 22nd of February the Johannesburg *Star* called Mr. Abraham Fischer (General Hertzog's chief) a strong supporter of Mr. Merriman's candidature.

Smuts meanwhile pursued the even tenor of his way. True to his tradition, he attended above all to educational affairs. At the Pretoria University College he delivered a speech in which he drew attention to the fact that "the academic mind requires a good deal of leisure and the absence of noise as far as possible." He wanted a "real teaching University" for the northern capital, but he thought that "it had had a most salutary effect on South Africa that such a large proportion of its youth had gone to Europe in order in imbibe the ideals of culture which they could scarcely attain here."

In March he told a Het Volk Congress that, thankful as he was for the support the Boers had given him, "it was not now a question of the confidence of the Dutch or English population of the Transvaal. The question was to gain the confidence of the whole population of South Africa, to build up an Afrikander nation from one end of South

Africa to another. It would be a difficult task, and he could see the day arrive when the Transvaal people would say that the leaders were working only in the interests of the Free State or the Cape, or that they were favouring Natal. But when that day came, let them remember that their friends were not fair-weather friends; that they had gone with them through the darkest days of their lives. When efforts were made to separate the leaders from the people, they must stand up and ask, 'Who can separate us?' He did not believe the attempts would be successful, but they would be made." Prophetic words, those!

On the 15th of April 1910 the Colonial Secretary represented General Botha at a Johannesburg banquet in honour of Lord Selborne, on the eve of the latter's departure from South Africa on the expiry of his term of office. "The circumstances of Lord Selborne's coming to this country," said General Smuts, "were unique. Never before had an Imperial statesman of such standing come to South Africa as Governor. Lord Selborne came in very critical days—days of depression, days of sullen temper on the part of the people of the Transvaal. He showed what could be done to right the situation. He got into touch with all sections of the people. He told them home-truths. His greatest trial was when he had to give up the position of an absolute autocrat, under Crown Colony Government, and take up the position of being a constitutional Governor. He was as successful in the second capacity as he was in the first. Ours is a very young community, full of energy. Lord Selborne helped South Africa in the most statesmanlike manner to moderate its transports. One could not repress the energy of the people. It must take new channels. Lord Selborne saw that the time was coming when new ideals had to be placed before the people."

And so the speech went on to give legitimate credit to His Excellency for work done, especially in the cause of Union. General Smuts, as a matter of fact, called Lord Selborne "the father of Union, who first ventured into the open," and who had been ever ready to give his advice to

the Convention. His Excellency had been more than a Governor to the Transvaal: he had been a personal friend. And still the speaker continued to praise, paying a graceful tribute, too, to Lady Selborne.

His Excellency, in his reply, did not omit to mention that "he had not always seen eye to eye with his Ministers." This may, or may not, have included a silent reference to the Esselen-Greenlees incident, mentioned in a previous chapter.

As the day of Union approached, attention was concentrated on General Botha. In the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*, F. R. P(aver) devoted an article to the enviable position occupied by the Premier, in the course of which he naturally dealt with the "combination of the two personalities" that had become such a power in the land. The article lauded Smuts' "sweet reasonableness," stating that "there has sometimes been a tendency to regard Botha as merely a figurehead and Smuts as the real god in the party machine, or at least to attribute to the former that remarkable influence which was indispensable if a stable and satisfactory position was to be maintained; and to Smuts the foresight, powers of organization, acumen, and readiness that were features of the collaboration." But ". . . though Smuts certainly has been to him a splendid working-partner, it is very largely the sound common sense, the native readiness of perspective of General Botha that made the Transvaal Government what it was."

On the 25th of April General Smuts was back at Krugersdorp. This time it was no Scottish Bobbie he had come to honour, but the Patron Saint of the Southron, and he improved the occasion by indulging in a little gentle irony at the expense of his English friends. The English he described as "a most humorous race, whether we take their literature, their politics (laughter), or the way they celebrate a great national occasion like the present." He pointed out that the monastic George, the protector of desolate virgins, was now looked upon as the progenitor *par excellence* of the English race (laughter). A previous speaker, he said,

had touched on the idealistic character of the saint, and, as an illustration, had mentioned that the British Empire to-day had twenty million square miles of territory and four hundred million people. The gentleman in question had stated that St. George's idealism had gone to support right against might. That enormous expansion of the Empire must be a peculiar application of the principle (renewed laughter). The English were like the Dutch, a reticent and retiring race, so much so that the other nationalities—the Scottish, Welsh, Irish, and Cornish—had taken advantage of their modesty to hold sway over them. He supposed that in a century the Dutch would come to celebrate the sacred memory of St. Louis. Both English and Dutch were rather unsociable. They were too intent on business, he told them. But not the whole of this speech was in lighter vein, even though, in the exuberance of his spirits, General Smuts had given hostages to fortune. He was quite serious when he held forth on the coming South African unity and the common purpose.

Nor did he, in looking forward at this period in our history, forget that which was dear in retrospect. At the end of May he sent a circular letter to the Transvaal School Boards, thanking them for what they had done in the cause of education. His constituents, on their part, presented him with an address in recognition of his services to the now defunct Wonderboom parliamentary division. On the day before the Transvaal ceased to exist as a separate Colony, a Lloyd cartoon appeared, showing the arrival of "Phœbus Botha" in the Union chariot (with apologies to G. Reni's picture, "The Dawn"), lighted on his way by the fair goddess "Aurora Smuts." On the 30th of May it was officially announced that General Smuts had become Minister of the Interior, of Mines, and of Defence, in the Union of South Africa. Mr. Lloyd was again inspired to incorporate Oom Jannie's likeness in a cartoon. He showed the victim, performing a solo in his ministration to "the Interior," by extracting three big plums from the Cabinet pudding. It should, perhaps, be mentioned that, whereas

"no portfolio, no screw" is one of the maxims of our Constitution, three portfolios do not constitute a "triple screw"!

"Mines" was indeed an important portfolio, and "The Interior" hardly less so, with multifarious co-ordinating activities ahead. But it was not long before the people of South Africa began to realize that in Jan Smuts they had, first and foremost, a Minister of Defence. His allusions to international possibilities and to coming internal trouble had gone largely unheeded, but he himself did not forget. In the Transvaal he had been in charge of Defence casually, as it were. Now, he devoted himself to military matters in real earnest. A separate Department was formed and an under-secretary appointed, while Headquarters were established in order to make it plain that this division of his work was to be no sinecure.

XI

"HEADQUARTERS" TO DOORNKLOOF

IT is the universal ambition of South Africans to be landed proprietors. It is the universal ambition of South African public men to escape as far as possible from the generally overwhelming, though flattering, attentions paid them during their leisure hours by supporters and others who, thanks to our easy manners, find no difficulty in paying calls even when uninvited. As General Smuts told the Pretoria students, the academic mind wants leisure and absence of noise. Moreover, he and Mrs. Smuts vie with each other in their love of Nature, and neither hankers after social triumphs. What more natural, then, that the man who had picked the Cabinet pudding to such good purpose should desire to escape from the Pretoria residence, associated in the public memory with Immanuel Kant and irrigated citrus-trees, to some rural retreat? His assumption of the three portfolios synchronized approximately with the removal of his *lares* and *penates* to Doornkloof (*anglicé* Mimosa Gorge), an estate close to the little station of Irene, some ten miles from the capital. The possession of this ground is not his only claim to the title of farmer, usually employed on his nomination paper when elections are afoot. Active agricultural operations on his behalf are carried on at Barberspan, a property situated in the Far West of the Transvaal, purchased and developed at a time when few moneyed men thought it worth their while to pay attention to such shabby-looking but valuable "desert" lands.

GENERAL SMUTS' IRENE HOUSE IN COURSE OF ERECTION.

(The house is now surrounded by a flower garden, many trees, etc.)

At Doornkloof he built himself a house on a steep slope, overlooking a fertile, well-wooded valley. The Hennops River here breaks picturesquely through a range of hills, one of them crowned by a dismantled blockhouse and called after the Derbyshire Regiment, which bravely charged when the Boers were in possession of the top. The view from Doornkloof homestead is a splendid one, but General Smuts also had practical points in view when he put through the transaction. Agriculture, stock-farming and forestry exist side by side at Doornkloof on a large scale ; they are by no means treated as a fancy or pastime. The visitor is struck by the extent of the lucerne fields, of the orchard and the fencing, as well as by other improvements, such as solidly built sheds, dams, and boreholes. It is not every large South African farm that can boast all these ; some of our politicians, drawing immoderately both on their imaginations and on their banking-accounts, have set about their work more ambitiously, but such enterprises do not always last, whereas Doornkloof looks a permanency.

The house has no pretensions to architectural beauty ; when the time comes for rebuilding, General Smuts will no doubt adopt the modern South African style, based on that of the old Cape homesteads, but with a distinction all its own. Meanwhile, the house has a more than liberal allowance of that typical accessory, the stoep. In addition it boasts an exceptional roominess, and a large number of seductive club easy-chairs—two factors of the utmost importance to comfort in our climate. Here General Smuts is invariably to be found on a Sunday, unless he is taking a stroll through his lands, accompanied by his never-failing companion, a stout walking-stick that is seen in nearly all the photographs of groups in which he appears. As a man-about-town, he dresses more carefully than the average South African (dress is not a strong point with us), yet without even a suspicion of dandyism. On his farm, he falls into the general habit, and the homeliness of his attire, no less then his attitude towards the welcome visitor, would put the most bashful at his ease.

A considerable amount of his time at Doornkloof is occupied by games with his children, of whom six are living. The memory of two who died during the Boer War is locked in Mrs. Smuts' heart. May I introduce the family? Item one: Susanna Johanna, commonly called Santa—a lanky, sardonic minx of thirteen; inclined to be a bit of a bookworm, but still able to take her share with the smaller ones in the manufacture of fearsome googlies, billikens, and monsters of that description out of carrots and other vegetable ingredients. Item two: Catharina Petronella, who would be very much offended if you called her that, for she is known as Cato, which we pronounce with the accent on the second syllable. The diminutive of Cato is Kaatje; there are also other pet names, but we shall not go into this branch of nomenclature for fear of incurring the wrath of this buxom tomboy of eleven. Cato has an exceptional talent for drawing, and is a high-spirited hoyden with an affectionate nature, which hides behind shyness disguised as stand-offishness. To say that she has a will of her own is to state the obvious about all the Smuts offspring. Unless I am misinformed, she is the terror of her school and of the farm neighbourhood, but a really nice doll will tame her within two seconds. Next comes Jacob' Daniel, yclept Japie, a pleasant, mild-mannered little chap. Japie is a bright child of studious disposition, who does his own little bit in making my occasional visits to Doornkloof red-letter days. Then there is Sibylla Margaretha, aged eight or thereabouts, who really answers to the name of Sylma. A richly humorous slip of a tow-head, this, with all the waywardness of her age, to say nothing of her sex! The lady is not afraid of telling people what she thinks of them, but she has a most ingratiating way with her at times, and I have wormed myself into her good graces by the clandestine supply of "cee-ga-r-r-r-ettes" (Miss Sylma has all the Malmesbury accent). Her mother is violently opposed to the consumption of this commodity, but it is in truth a very innocent one, being of Holland origin and composed of nothing but chocolate. However, this little secret is not to

be given away, because an old man's grey hairs are not safe from the extracting energies of little Sylma when she takes it into her head to turn her laughing eyes into angry dagger-points, threatening to dart out from under a tousled mop.

Now we come to the pick of the bunch—Jan Christian, that is to say, Klein Jannie, which is the equivalent of Little Johnnie. Jannie is four and fair, the image of his father, and, as far as one can judge at such a tender age, of remarkable intellect. His are the precocious dignity and self-consciousness of so many South African children. He will tell you with pride that his "Pappie" is "away East, shooting Germans," but, alas, it is joyless pride, because Klein Jannie would much prefer to have Groot Jannie's lap and shoulders nearer Doornkloof. In times of peace and on days of rest, you will find Jannie where the General is, and the boy has listened to many a confabulation of State. He is not much more sociable than his father used to be in the early seventies. Time was when Klein Jannie ruled the household with a rod of iron, but the mightiest throne will crumble in time. At present, authority is very much divided, and the source of Jannie's partial dethronement is a chubby mite of less than two years, inscribed in the civil registers of Pretoria by a doting father as Louisa Anne Rebelle. This came about owing to the fact that the young lady made her first appearance when the rebellion had just broken out, and General Smuts thought it would be a good joke to stamp its name on her. The other two names were given in honour of General and Mrs. Botha. Mrs. Smuts, who refuses to have any truck with rebellion, even jocosely, has forbidden me under divers pains and penalties as much as to breathe the insurgent appellation, either in her presence or elsewhere. The poor baby appears to share her mother's political proclivities, for occasional disregard of the injunction on my part has led the snub-nosed, fair-haired, pink-cheeked little thing to pronounce my cognomen in accents of ineffable scorn. In this she is aided and abetted by Santa, but she herself bears me

an ancient, though not exactly honourable, grudge: I once rescued her from imminent suicide by depriving her of a piece of purple aniline dye, off which she had fully intended, encouraged by Klein Jannie and neglected by the nurse-girl, to make a substantial meal. Even before this, she once exercised the undoubted power of her lungs to the full for no better reason than that I took it upon myself to save the unworthy life of a particularly vicious-looking mantis she was determined to devour. But I have since been careful to make my peace with this, the most influential and strong-willed member of the family, who is in actual practice called Louïe and Lammetjie (lambkin).

These six youthful specimens of Transvaal humanity and the controversial part of politics occupy most of Mrs. Smuts' time. More than this I dare hardly say about the châtelaine of Doornkloof, because if the General is averse to any publicity over and above the minimum that he cannot, as a public man, escape, Mrs. Smuts is even more determined to take refuge within her own temple of domesticity. A rude journalist, who pretends that he saw her at home once, presumed to describe her as "carrying a Boer baby under one arm and a Greek dictionary under the other." The phrase is libellous in its terseness; one can only suppose that the man must have heard others talk about Mrs. Smuts' devotion to her children on the one hand and her learning on the other. A more simple-styled, unaffected hostess it would be difficult to find. Well-read and proficient in modern as well as in ancient languages, Mrs. Smuts carefully if unconsciously avoids any show of the traditional blue-stocking quality. She is of a retiring disposition, but with an engaging frankness, and cordiality itself to the guest who comes with proper credentials, prepared to reciprocate her own naturalness of manner. Her whole appearance denotes strength of character, coupled with that exceptional sense of duty which has been her husband's guiding star. Uncomplaining, with the combined stoicism of the classics and the veld, she leads the existence of life-partner to the man whose task drags him so often and so far from where

Photo by Munro, Pretoria.

GENERAL SMUTS' CHILDREN, 1915.

his inclination lies. Her nature is as masterful, in its way, as his. Jan Smuts, we may be sure, is the one man in South Africa to whom she would defer. It is not meet that I should say aught else, but what these two are to each other is best shown by the name she mostly uses when she speaks of him. It is "Boetie," the boy-and-girl term which, etymologically, is the diminutive of the Dutch word for brother, but in its deeper meaning closely corresponds to the English "chum." When first I mooted to her my intention of recording a few facts about the General in a form a little less ephemeral than the average newspaper article, she, knowing his wishes of course, uttered a very strong demur. But eventually, when she saw how obstinate I was, she supplemented the information at my disposal, and I cannot say how deeply indebted I am to her for her assistance.

General Smuts is a patron of the graphic arts, and his house contains several notable canvases from the brush of South African painters. Still-life, mountain scenery, and *genre* are all represented. One of his photographic reproductions of the masterpieces of antiquity is that of "Winged Victory," and the host is fond of telling the anecdote of the American who, on seeing this famous work, exclaimed that, if this were victory, he would wish to know what defeat was like! More modern photographs abound. The late President Kruger is represented several times, both alone and seated with other one-time Transvaal dignitaries. There are commandants who fell in the Boer War, and the parlour contains an excellent enlargement of a curious historical photograph, taken in the stony Cape desert somewhere about 1902. Commandant (now General) van Deventer is in the picture; one of the figures surrounding Jan Smuts—who carries a sjambok—is Maritz. Lord Buxton and family, Lord and Lady Gladstone look out from among the frames. As mementoes of happier days, when the apple of discord had not yet been openly thrown, Generals C. de Wet, Hertzog, Beyers, and Kemp hang on the walls. The finely chiselled face of De la Rey is there, too. Large-size

pictures of Conventions, Ministries, military staffs and other groups go to make up a highly interesting collection. Few likenesses of the owner of the house meet the eye, but I fancy that slim Santa knows where others are to be found. General Botha's smiling features are not lacking, nor is President Reitz's more serious countenance. Miss Emily Hobhouse's aristocratic lineaments are in close proximity to Mr. Ewald Esselen's forensic, deep-lined head.

Amidst surroundings such as these, Smuts lives as simple and unostentatious a life as the world around will let him. Of his paternal fondness it is unnecessary to speak here. He is often represented as eminently cold-blooded and anti-social, but there are few more fascinating hosts in South Africa. Let us take the liberty of intruding at the commencement of a meal. We hear him say: "Mammie, sal ons nou maar bid," upon which Mrs. Smuts leads in a short prayer. Strictly between ourselves: some of the children have their eyes closed, while one or two in their religious zeal are looking to find out whether the others are not keeping theirs open. This over, General Smuts pours out a glass of the particular brand of light, white Cape wine that is practically his only form of alcoholic stimulant, and even that he takes in very small quantities. Usually, there is but one toast, typical of the man: "Absent friends." Dinner over, the laird of Doornkloof reaches what in South Africa must be regarded as the height of hospitality (whatever they may say in Scotland), by offering a fine, full-flavoured "fat cigar of ze Havana," as Svengali would call it. He himself is a non-smoker, despite some of the cartoons in which he figures. It is on this account that his thoughtfulness deserves to be all the more appreciated, for as a rule the cigar offered in South Africa is vile. In the company of My Lady Nicotine we withdraw to the study; there the host will be found to be prepared to regale the attentive listener with stories of his past; visions of the future—but with these he is chary, in private; views on the technicalities of sheep-shearing and the stocking of an estate with guinea-fowl; or metaphysical dissertations, according to individual

taste. His comprehensive knowledge and the lucidity upon which Sir Edgar Walton remarked are always apparent; I suppose it is not his fault but mine if he fails to make me understand the exact difference between our ideas of time and Bergsonian duration. It is difficult to trip him up in general literature, and even in poetic lore he is rich. But the epic and the esoteric among the bards claim his attention almost exclusively; I suspect him of no more than indifferent inward response to purely lyrical appeal. Maybe his youthful faculties in this direction have become atrophied by neglect and ground down by the millstone of life. Of music he seldom speaks; once I asked him whether he kept up an interest in this branch of art. His reply was an expression of regret—"one gets so little time for these things." But the real music-lover will be loth to accept even this as a good and sufficient reason for the failure to seek Bach's exalted sermon, Beethoven's profound tone-poem, Brahms' richly coloured mood-painting, Chopin's haunting bitter-sweetness, Schubert's gentle melancholy, Berlioz's emotional vigour. You forgive him this lukewarmness, however, because when you have roved with him through the domain of human accomplishment, and your Havana is doing its work, he will pour out the milk of human kindness by inviting you to enjoy a Transvaal siesta. And this is really the topmost peak of hospitality's glorious heights.

Let us assume that you accept this invitation in the spirit that prompted it, and after half an hour or so wake up on the study sofa. Your host is still under the soporific influence of your share of the conversation, resting in some other part of the house. You rub your eyes, and inspect the walls of the study. It is not a cell-like apartment, but an exceptionally large room. With such an owner, it is likely, you imagine, to show signs of strength rather than of elegance, and you will be correct. The martial note is prominent: a large German flag, with a pronounced eagle, covers a portion of one wall. It is a trophy from the South-West campaign, as is also a solid brass shield in a corner. Maps are all around

you and Blue-books oppress the atmosphere. No pedantic neatness mars the attractiveness of the shelves, but the thousands of tomes are ranged systematically nevertheless. One department of the library is devoted almost entirely to literature bearing on military affairs, and in particular on the present war.. A book of Hobson's on Internationalism is hobnobbing with Royce's *War and Insurance* and other literature dealing with the economic aspect of the great struggle. Works on British Imperial Defence are present. You will find a History of the Standard Bank of South Africa, and in close proximity a poor, forlorn miniature edition of Pringle, the late South African poet. Joseph Conrad's fiction and a biography of Venizelos somehow manage to club together. Brandès, Bacon, a geological treatise and various annuals next attract the eye. Then one gets to a division concerning Germany and her qualities. Bernhardi figures here, of course, with Lewin's *The Germans and Africa* and Ellis Barker's *Modern Germany*. The high-priest of modern anti-Semitism is represented by his monumental, if perverse, *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Readers will perhaps recognize this better as Professor H. S. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*; but General Smuts reads such works in the original.

You turn round to visit another department, and in doing so notice his appointment as Major-General, in very fair Dutch, signed by Lord Buxton, lying on the table. Now the encyclopædias and dictionaries are reached. In this neighbourhood, ancient and modern books on African travel are found in profusion. Lichtenstein is there as a matter of course, with a very fine edition of Kolbe; also Damberger's less generally known *Landreise*, dated 1801. Shaw's *Memorials of South Africa*, Barrow's *Travels*, and many books on the natives of the sub-continent testify to the owner's geographical and historical interests. You notice a whole series of textbooks on details of military service.

Vambéry nudges the Year-books of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science. Aptly enough, your eye is caught by beautiful specimens of rocks, resting

on a shelf. Works on Evolution stand stock-still in the company of books dealing with fertilizers, soil analysis, and kindred subjects. Darwin and Chemistry, Hygiene and Canada, memoranda of all kinds, drafts of legislation, and miscellaneous volumes dwell together in peace.

The glory of the collection is the part consecrated to Law. A number of modern statutes look *parvenus* by the side of old South African law books, but there is nothing "cheap" about Dr. Manfred Nathan's three large and abstruse volumes on the Common Law of South Africa, close to a Dutch edition of Baden-Powell's compendium of Boy Scouting. Near by is the great Grotius, and around him shine other legal luminaries of Holland—Linden and all the great authorities who are quoted. English manuals of jurisprudence you will encounter in great numbers; they have no quarrel with Bluntschli's *Voelkerrecht*. There are disquisitions on the laws of Evidence, of Partnership, of Agency, of Compensation—and so the list could be continued. But you are not going to make a catalogue, otherwise you would include Molitor's (Ghent) *Droit Romain*, dozens of volumes of Glueck's *Erlaeuterung der Pandecten*, a French edition of Justinian, books on seventeenth-century French law, and hundreds of other vessels of legal learning.

To the mere layman, however lost in admiration, it is a relief to turn to an adjoining department, where memoirs and biography hold sway. Disraeli is a link between England and South Africa, because the late Mr. Monypenny was once a Johannesburg journalist. Several extensive histories of the Boer War jostle each other. Your glance takes in several books on Constitutions, only to find that a much more succulent subject is treated in volumes on the Cape Flora. Two or three most interesting Dutch Bibles, huge specimens, bound in solid leather with brass clamps, are sure to draw attention. They contain curious illustrations, more curious dedications, and the printers of some of them must have been in league with the oculist, for the letterpress is Gothic. The editors were catholic

if not Catholics, because they included the Apocrypha in those days.

Then you are carried in thought to America, for Roosevelt, Wilson, and Booker Washington have their places on the shelves; alongside you discover valuable information on the British Empire and its various component parts, as well as Professor Muensterberg's amazing psychological and other dicta. A host of authors on political economy, ownership of land, industrial questions, high finance, ethics, taxation, sociology, and who knows what other branches of knowledge, crowd together in this vicinity.

The section Metaphysics contains many standard works, as might be expected of such a thorough Kantian as Jan Smuts. You may not find Solomon Maimon, but if you engage your host in conversation you will discover that he is well acquainted with the comment supplied by this tattered, subtle philosopher of the eighteenth century on the sage of Koenigsberg's works. The immaculate Immanuel himself could not very well be absent; his *Critiques*, in both languages, stare you in the face. Nietzsche frowns on the intruder, and Kuno Fischer looks terrifyingly erudite with his ten volumes of *Geschichte der Neuen Philosophie.* You meet works on Logic, and decades of Reviews full of philosophical and ethical matter. W. James' *Pragmatism* nods to Carpenter. The doubting Descartes questions his neighbour Hegel. Frederic Harrison is "positively" polite to no less an opponent than Mr. Mallock. Martineau bows to Leibnitz; Maudsley's *Pathology of the Mind* does not frighten the seventeenth-century Maker of Lenses on whose shoulders Kant is often said to have stood.

A recent contribution to philosophy that claims particular attention is Dr. W. P. Steenkamp's *Die Agnosticisme van Herbert Spencer.* Dr. Steenkamp is a cleric who ministers to the inhabitants of a Karroo congregation, and as such came into unpleasant contact with General Smuts' minions during the Rebellion period. He attained his degree in Amsterdam on writing this treatise in fine

Afrikaans, the language often miscalled "the Taal" by English writers. Spencer's *Autobiography* looks askance at Steenkamp's Calvinistic criticism, and McCabe's *Evolution of Mind* is certainly no less haughty. Sir Oliver Lodge's *Life and Matter* is doing its best to accord with Lotze's *Metaphysic*. Bergson claims a modest place, as far as mere inches are concerned, with his *Time and Free Will*, *Laughter*, and *Creative Evolution*. But there are English and French books on the Paris wizard.

Reverting for a moment to the miscellaneous section, we find that at first we failed to pick out studies of Kaffirdom; Sir W. Laurier's speeches (in French); technical works on Education; books on University administration (!); Hansard volumes; books on the conquest of arid districts; and so many others that the head reels! Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics* succeeds in preserving the peace, although in juxtaposition with Veitch's *Institute of Logic*—and now, to rest your tired eyes, you look at the wall for a moment, where you see the likeness of Desiderius Erasmus, the Rotterdam forerunner of the Reformation, as engraved by the august Holbein. A photograph of Lord Methuen hangs close to the late President Kruger's political testament, embodied in a letter to General Botha, while not far off there are designs of the babylonian Union Buildings which Pretoria owes in no slight measure to General Smuts' largeness of mould.

Sitting down for a brief moment, you are not so rash as to ask whether Oom Jannie has read all the books in the library he modestly calls his study. Even if he has not devoured them from cover to cover, you may be sure that he has digested all that he has read, and that he will know exactly where to lay his hand at short notice on any information he may require. There he enters, through the door, asking with the most serious face in the world whether you had pleasant dreams. Now he takes you into the corridors and into other rooms where the incredibly large stock of reading-matter overflows into cupboards and on to bookcases. He is proud, as a South African, of the gorgeously

illustrated work by Professor Marloth on the Flora of the Union, and he will lead you past large numbers of books that are perhaps the special property of Mrs. Smuts. Classical fiction and the poets, history and the latest novelistic atrocities masquerading as representations of South African life, are tolerantly, even generously, gathered into the fold: there is no end to the quality and variety of this remarkable collection. Pocket editions of the Bible in a dozen languages, hundreds of the very latest belletristic productions of the printing press of Holland, King Albert's Book, Cicero, pure mathematics and Ecclesiastical History, will not be looked for in vain.

We must away!

As General Smuts, not by any means at the end of his tether as an entertainer, makes you admire his old Dutch chests and his pottery, he mentions in passing a desert plant-seed holding grimly on to a curtain. He will teleologically point out that it resembles a monstrous spider, thus reversing the process of animals mimicking plant life. From the great Kalahari, whence he brought this specimen during the German South-West Africa campaign, there is a natural transition to the political gales raging round his external policy; with quiet triumph he smiles when he speaks of his stalwart constituents of Pretoria West, whose eyes are not even blinded by the clouds of desert sand, swirled and swept in ugly spirals by those disturbances of the mental atmosphere.

But now Klein Jannie comes skipping along; you leave a fond parent to the delights that only a home can give, carrying away with you the conviction that much learning has not impaired either the soundness or the freshness of this man; that so long as there is life in Jan Smuts it will be scintillating life; and that in the deep recesses of his wonderfully eclectic mind no dank or musty places can exist.

XII

DOORNKLOOF TO BLOEMFONTEIN

WITH the Union delimitation of constituencies Wonderboom had disappeared, but in Pretoria West the Minister of Defence found a safe seat. There were not wanting critics at the time who said that neither he nor General Botha should have risked the verdict of the fickle multitudes of a town—and of Pretoria particularly—but that both should have become candidates for some country district. The *African World* of the 4th of June 1910 called Smuts an "advanced political thinker of European type, regarded by the Backveld Boer as perhaps too clever and certainly too liberal," adding that he would make his mark in any Legislature. While there may have been, even then, a measure of truth in this statement of the case as between him and the farming vote, it would be a mistake to suppose that fear kept him in Pretoria. Rather is the reason for his decision to be looked for in the reverse of this. Het Volk in the Transvaal days had been essentially a country party, but owing very largely to the attitude of its leaders, prominent among whom was General Smuts, it now made a wider appeal, seeking to incorporate the work of Union into its own fabric by joining the town-dweller to his country friends. It was therefore good policy on the part of Ministers to attempt to wrench from the Unionists (Labour being hardly a serious force at that time) as many urban constituencies as they could.

There were three candidates in the field against Smuts, but he repeated his 1907 tactics by leaving Pretoria West to look after itself more often than not, and by rushing into the fray elsewhere. In July he spoke at Johannesburg, hitting the Progressives, who had now become the Unionists, with the weapon of his sarcasm, which resembles neither the bludgeon nor the rapier, but stands somewhere midway between them. He turned the tables on his opponents by calling them what they and their predecessors had often called the Boer party, viz. *remschoens* (brake-blocks). Constructive work was wanted, he said. At a Unionist meeting, some one had asked whether any mere party government could establish a system of defence to which both English and Dutch could agree. "That," he scornfully remarked, "does not trouble me at all! Only those who are visited by the nightmare of 'English and Dutch' trouble about such things. If South Africa wishes to make herself worthy of her new status as a nation, a national defence force must necessarily be established."

It is worthy of note that he dealt with industrial questions, and once more advocated a white South Africa. If his enthusiasm for this ideal appears to have waned slightly in the years that followed, one may surely attribute the fact to the revolutionary character assumed in South Africa by the Labour movement, and the violence with which white labour has made its demands.

The favourite theme of Unionist speakers was the education difficulty in the Orange Free State; they made the welkin ring with their cries of "Hertzogism." General Smuts did not shirk this issue; he declared it, as indeed it was, non-germane to the Union election, the control of education having been relegated to the respective provinces. But, speaking at Troyeville in July 1910, he was bold enough to praise local patriotism, in order to deprecate the requests made to the Government "to coerce a particular province whose educational policy was said to be wrong. . . . We express no opinion about that system, but can we abrogate the educational laws of the Free

State? No earthly power can do that, without a revolution." [1]

At Jeppe, towards the end of July, he was concerned to deny a Unionist insinuation to the effect that there was a Labour–Het Volk coalition, and he did so in a spirit of levity which sometimes possesses him when he is entirely optimistic: "I myself am opposed by a Labour man in Pretoria West, and I wish him luck!" At the same time, he said that he did not grudge Labour a fair share of representation; he refused to damn Mr. Creswell, who had left the British wing of Het Volk in order to lead the working men's party. He was reluctant to assume, he said, that the Unionists wished to fan the flame of racialism; therefore he took it that their continual references to "Hertzogism" and to purely local questions were caused by their desire to divert attention from more serious questions.

At Johannesburg the Unionists held one of their great "rallies" that have become famous in the political history of the Transvaal. At Krugersdorp, early in August, General Smuts discussed this rally; he apportioned some mixed praise to Dr. Jameson, whose speech he had read with pleasure "because it did not breathe the racialism so noticeable in the words of his colleagues. Dr. Jameson had lived down his past by doing good work. But the public were tired of 'Hertzogism' and 'Coalition'; yet Dr. Jameson had spoken of nothing else. General Botha was South Africa's strong man, and if it had been humanly possible to have a Coalition Government, General Botha would have established one."

A Krugersdorp voter began cross-questioning General Smuts about the manner in which his present position

[1] During the first Session of the Union Parliament, the Unionists were clever enough to entice the Government away from this eminently sound attitude. As the result of a Select Committee report, General Botha asked the provinces to conform to certain principles in the management of their schools, in order that "equality without compulsion" might be attained. The Free State complied. Natal was highly indignant when, six years later, a motion was introduced into Parliament asking for legally recognized equality of the Dutch language in the Natal schools.

squared with his position at the Burns celebration. The Minister replied, with mock-indignation, that no man should be held accountable for what he said on Burrrns' Nicht!

Important and hotly contested as the election was, he lived up to his best traditions by not losing sight of the practical interests of education. We find him at the laying of the foundation-stone of a new University College, expressing the hope that in a hundred years' time the institution might have become the Oxford of South Africa. At about this time, his Unionist opponent in Pretoria West, Major Hopley, became literary. He compared Government to an octopus, assigning to General Smuts the part of the inksack in its interesting anatomy. To this he added, with doubtful consistency, that "Smuts' brains were the greatest danger to the future of South Africa." The whole of Pretoria Unionism was in high dudgeon when General Smuts, a few days later, retorted by the public assurance that "not even Mr. Hopley's worst enemy would say the same of Mr. Hopley." The rest of us laughed—somewhat immoderately, it is to be feared. But the incident did not leave any scars, for during the 1915 election Major Hopley was a strong supporter of his erstwhile opponent.

In August the Minister spoke at Johannesburg once more. He drew attention to the "Wreckers" poster of 1907, and asked whether the Transvaal had really gone back with him at the helm. He also entered the lists on behalf of General Botha, against whom, he considered, there had been "cold sneers" in speeches by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and the late Sir George Farrar concerning the quality of the Premier's English: "Here is the greatest man in South Africa, who has never had the opportunity to learn English in his day, but who, in order to get into touch with his British fellow-citizens, has since the war learnt English, and picked up sufficient to give him the courage to address a meeting in that language." This action was compared with that of the two knights in question, "who cannot address a meeting in Dutch. It is shameful, and I hope it will not occur again." These words led to a controversy, in the course of which

General Smuts overwhelmingly proved his contention, although it is but fair to his opponents to say that, in his slashing electioneering way, he had made the most of his case. Incidentally he had shown his loyalty to his chief and his language.

There is no doubt that Pretoria West harbours a number of parochial-minded electors, and when, on the 8th of August, the Minister made his first appearance on a local platform, he gave them to understand once for all that he made no promises; he "appealed confidently for their support on the strength of the Government's record."

The day after, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick had a hit back by comparing the General to Cleopatra: "Age cannot wither him nor custom stale his infinite variety. Why, he has variety at every meeting!" Undeterred by such comparisons, Smuts sallied forth among the Cleopatras of Johannesburg, particularly the women's branch of Het Volk. In encouraging them to perform their share of the work with enthusiasm, he asked them to assist in building up a South Africa "whose interests should rank before any other consideration." At subsequent meetings, he retaliated by reproaching Sir Percy with the latter's practice of making revelations about happenings at the National Convention, which were then supposed to be confidential.

With his 1907 energy undiminished, Smuts attended meetings practically every day, and sometimes more than once a day. In the middle of August he fell ill with measles, thus providing the cartoonists with ample material for the exercise of their wit. The illness was not a diplomatic one, but on the 30th of the same month he spoke with General Botha at a Pretoria meeting. The election, he said, was one of "false issues," raised by the Unionists. For him there was no racial aspect of the struggle; all civilized races were welcome to South Africa. Almost equally unequivocal was his pronouncement on the question of women's franchise. At present, he thought, it was not wanted; the moment the women wanted the franchise, he would be prepared to give it them. He did not omit to

add that he considered them very wise for not wanting it just yet! And a nod is as good as a wink to those who know their Jan Smuts.

A *Transvaal Leader* correspondent who attended this meeting wrote to his paper: "Smuts had the air of a strong man refreshed, rather than that of a convalescent. Subtle and inscrutable, wily and wary, he smilingly guiled his audience away from serious thought into the pleasant paths of wit and laughter."

Innumerable questions were asked by voters, at this transition stage in our history, relating both to the far distant past and the no less distant future. With admirable fortitude, and the tact for which he has become famous, General Smuts answered them all, or nearly all. But sometimes his patience became overstrained, and at one meeting he said something perilously near "damn." At which there was a voice: "Don't swear, uncle." The Minister replied: "This is an open-air meeting" (laughter). In September he found time to attend a bazaar held for the benefit of discharged prisoners, at which he said: "I do not know whether Mr. Churchill has been copying Mr. Roos' ideas, but the ideas now introduced in England have been working in the Transvaal for some time past."

The great enigma of the election was Natal. It had two representatives in the Cabinet, both Englishmen, but its peculiarly isolated—one might almost say "insulated"—position in politics made its vote an uncertain one. Notwithstanding the fact that many Natalians looked askance at "a Dutch Cabinet," Generals Botha and Smuts received an ovation when they addressed an overcrowded meeting in the town hall at Durban in September. The Minister for Defence said, *inter alia*: "It is impossible to foresee what enemy we shall have to meet. In South Africa we have one of the richest possessions in the world. No one knows when our day of trial is to come."

Some one interjected: "You can't have two nations under one crown."

General Smuts: "I know what you are thinking about.

It is only a lunatic who thinks in that way" (loud applause).

He asked Natal to allow itself to become imbued by the feeling of Union, and to trust the Government. He wanted a strong Government during the next ten years, for constructive purposes. In England, he said, people lived in a false sense of security, and it was difficult to get them to take an interest in defence. In South Africa they had known war, and while the feeling of responsibility was warm within them they should create a national defence system. He hoped the country would not want to build a "little tin fleet of its own." Durban he intended to fortify so that "foreign war-vessels could not come to take their coal"; in fact, he outlined a scheme for putting the whole of our coast-line in a state of defence. And there were other ambitious plans, such as for the immigration of skilled agriculturists from Europe, all of which, he admitted, would "cost money." This made an intelligent Durbanite inquire whether the Government "favoured" further taxation (!). General Smuts answered, guardedly, that he *hoped* there would be no further taxation.

In the Transvaal he addressed many more meetings before the fateful day came; on the Rand he complained that "Billingsgate was becoming a very popular form of argument" as that day drew near. On the eve of the poll he supported General Botha at a Pretoria demonstration. When the votes were counted, the name of Jan Smuts proved to be first in Pretoria West, with a majority over his three opponents combined.

Parliament had no sooner assembled at Cape Town than there were some lively debates. To some extent the disappointment of the Unionists at the failure of the Coalition idea was to blame for a few of the scenes that marked the first Session. Sir Starr Jameson did his best, both in the House and in the Lobby, to smooth the ruffled feathers of his followers, but he was only partially successful. Provincialism was rampant. The action of the late Transvaal Government in initiating building operations for the Union

at Meintjeskop—our local Acropolis, as General Smuts called it—before there was any one to sanction the expenditure, came in for more than its share of criticism. Mr. Jagger, of Cape Town, in particular, was wont severely to condemn such expenditure as did not happen to benefit Cape Town, or at least the Cape Peninsula. The Minister of the Interior, while admitting the technical illegality of the Pretoria proceedings, and clothing himself, as he put it, "in the white sheet of repentance," strongly defended the measures taken on grounds of policy, and accused Mr. Jagger of being above all things "peninsular."

His fellow-members very soon had opportunities for tasting the quality of his steel. Here was a larger arena than the "tin-pot show"—the words are his, not mine—he had just abolished. Here were old parliamentary hands; here, too, were problems of fresh magnitude and character. But if any one ever doubted that Jan Smuts would bulk as largely in the public eye as before, with so many other figures to claim attention, these doubts were set at rest before many months had passed. His powers seemed to develop as opportunities for development arrived, and when he chose to speak, attention was riveted on his words perhaps more closely than had been the case in the North. The *Rand Daily Mail* gallery correspondent tells the tale thus: "General Smuts won universal admiration by his encyclopædic knowledge, his microscopic acquaintance with detail, and his agility in darting from one office to another. At one moment he is explaining with great accuracy a matter of asylum discipline, at another he lectures on printing costs. An hour later he is exciting the House to enthusiasm by a glowing tribute to our splendid military material; by-and-by he discusses mining economics with the best. Truly a marvellous man, and a monument of patient, manysided industry! He deserves a rest, but . . . Jan has to work a double shift. He flourishes on it."

This praise came not from a party organ, but from an independent newspaper that was not afraid of the most outspoken criticism when it considered the case demanded

it. In March 1911 the *Mail* was moved by a debate on a fresh eruption of the Asiatic rash to make the following remarks: "General Smuts' powers of dialectics are unequalled on either side of the House. Occasionally he can sweep away inconvenient reminiscences with an airy cynicism that is successful from its sheer audacity. There is, however, a limit beyond which it is dangerous to fool the public. . . . The Asiatics wanted the open door. By General Smuts it was closed and locked. To-day he flings it open and hands them the key, with an injunction not to cross the threshold."

On the 1st of March 1911 the Minister of Defence blocked out a scheme for military organization in a speech that was widely and favourably noticed, both for its excellent tone and for the matter it contained. A few days later he tackled that extremely difficult question, miners' phthisis, in a Bill that is to be counted among his minor successes. It was generally recognized that he had mastered the medical side of his subject, as far as it was then known. Politically and economically, however, he did not give such universal satisfaction. The *Rand Daily Mail*, for instance, accused him of conforming too readily to the opinions expressed by Sir Lionel Phillips (who had blossomed forth, from being a sort of platonic, non-political admirer of the Transvaal Government, as a prominent Unionist) by subsequently amending the fledgling. The Minister introduced the principle of contributions by the miners themselves, in order to make them more careful. To-day this principle survives in a recent enactment, looked upon as practically perfect; at the time, the champions of the new "democracy" affected to consider the idea atrocious. A *Mail* cartoon turned Jan Smuts into a blustering pirate who did not scruple to make his own original Bill "walk the plank." Other caricatures depicted him as a snake-charmer, in playful reference to his Asiatic performances.

During the recess that followed the Minister of the Interior showed conclusively his freedom from race prejudice by publishing details of an arrangement under which

oversea families of men living in the Union would be granted assisted passages to South Africa. At Lydenburg he illustrated the principle underlying this encouragement of immigration by the statement that "he hoped never to see any line of division drawn in South Africa except the one of colour." This beginning was too modest, however, to please the non-Dutch multitude of our towns, and in the *Mail* a cartoon, signed H. H. P., appeared of General Smuts as "The Sower." You see him with grandiose gesture scattering a few poor seeds of white immigration; their fate is fore-ordained, because the stony soil is almost covered with a crop of heads marked "Imported blacks."

He had indicated in Parliament that, with regard to the huge undeveloped tracts in the dry interior, Government would pursue "a strong forward policy." That this was no mere catch-phrase was proved by a journey he undertook in September 1911 through Griqualand West. At Kimberley he was waylaid by the Dutch inhabitants; willy-nilly he had to make a speech. "It appears to me," he said, "that the rich are getting too rich, and the poor are becoming too poor. I shall see what I can do for the poor. But I do not wish to speak, because the older I get, the more I am convinced that speeches do greater harm than good." He referred to the Kimberley oration of 1895, wistfully adding that he was not sure whether he now knew as much of South African politics as he did then! But this, he said, he did know: there was only one policy that had a chance of success—the policy of co-operation.

At Barkley West the diggers asked for a Royal Commission to inquire into their conditions of living, diamond legislation, etc. General Smuts was more than ordinarily frank in his answer. They could adopt a "less expensive and more expeditious way of arriving at a solution—they could safely leave matters in his hands. . . ."

Questions were asked about the coming defence scheme, but the only thing gathered from his lips, Reuter tells us, was that "he did not think the new conditions would

affect the diggers much, except perhaps that they would be better pleased."

I am very much afraid that these few brief extracts from his Griqualand eloquence will not be appreciated at their true value, except by those who know General Smuts in the flesh and have seen him handle meetings in like manner. For I cannot, by mere words, convey any idea of the blandness of his facial expression when he makes remarks of this kind, nor of the puzzled countenances of his hearers while they are making up their minds as to what sort of grimace should accompany the humorous treatment to which they are being subjected.

General Smuts visited several budding townships in the arid stretch of country that falls monotonously from Kimberley to the foot of the Langeberg. But what he said and did at each one of them is not known to the present humble chronicler, who consoles himself with the reflection that it did not matter very greatly, viewed in perspective. For in November of the same year the historic conference was held at Bloemfontein at which the several political parties supporting the Cabinet were formally amalgamated. And thereby hangs a tale.

XIII

BLOEMFONTEIN TO THE TREASURY

"I DO not know how long this Government is going to last; it sometimes happens that Governments disappear sooner than people expect."

These were General Smuts' words at the Congress that led to the formation of the South African party at Bloemfontein in November 1911. They were not noticed much at the time, except by those who had opportunities of peeping behind the scenes. The ordinary spectator of the political show probably took them to be the outcome of a playful disposition, for to all outward seeming the Government was strongly entrenched. But we have seen on previous occasions that when Jan Smuts makes use of what might sound like platitudes, there is, generally speaking, some specific meaning attached to his words. And so it was now. General Hertzog has since told us that, from the very beginning of Union, relations between himself and several of his colleagues, notably Generals Botha and Smuts, were strained. He appears to attribute to Smuts particularly the proposal (conveyed to him by Mr. Malan in 1910) that he should accept a judgeship instead of continuing in politics. Even observers who were not intimately acquainted with all these circumstances had lately begun to notice that something was amiss. When General Botha attended the Imperial Conference of 1911, and allowed it to be understood at the Eighty Club that he would welcome immigration —of the right men—General Hertzog went to his con-

stituency of Smithfield in order to lay down the doctrine that "State-aided immigration would be a national crime." Even apart from this indiscretion, directed against the Premier, the tone of his utterances and the extent of his personal propaganda were such that General Botha must have become alarmed at the danger to party unity. For immediately after the Prime Minister's return from England, arrangements were made for a tour of his constituency (Losberg), which took place in September.

From personal observation I can testify that nothing could have exceeded either the warmth or the dimensions of the welcome that greeted General Botha. His meetings were largely attended by the farmers. Enthusiastic and unanimous votes of confidence were passed, and there was a cordial personal note in the relationship between his old friends and himself. It was clear that his popularity had not suffered in the slightest degree, and while on the crest of the wave he did not neglect the opportunity of saying a few words about his bold and interesting colleague. No names were mentioned, of course! But among all those hundreds there can hardly have been one sufficiently obtuse to have misunderstood the Premier's references to "people who commence to climb a mountain long before they have reached the foot." Nor was it possible to misconstrue the impassioned assurances to the effect that lackland South Africans would be provided with holdings before State-aided immigration came to pass. And when, to clinch matters, General Botha elaborately dealt with the language question (which was the main plank in the Hertzog platform), even those who until then might have failed to grasp the significance of his allusions could hardly have continued in a state of mental darkness. It was on the question of language that the audiences were not so completely carried away as they were with regard to the other points at issue; there was a noticeable hesitancy, a certain amount of coldness and reserve, among them when the time came to applaud General Botha's words on this subject. A correspondent of *Ons Land* (Cape Town), who was present, wrote

that "the pro-Botha demonstrations were in no wise to be regarded as anti-Hertzog expressions of opinion, because the Transvaal Boer has an affection for both; he honours General Hertzog's efforts on behalf of the complete equality in practice of Dutch and English." But in the main, General Botha and his Government had scored a huge success. The Losbergers are typical Transvaal Boers of the old stamp, and the series of meetings might legitimately be taken as an index of what the country districts thought and felt.

It is important to bear this circumstance in mind, because of the political partnership between Generals Botha and Smuts. They now knew that, as far as the Dutch-speaking section of their supporters was concerned, there was a majority for the liberal policy that was to find its consummation at the City of Conferences. At the same time, General Smuts fully realized that there were breakers ahead, and he must have had, judging from his own words, a sense of considerable uneasiness. Probably he had misgivings as to whether the time was really ripe for the establishment of such a broad, all-embracing organization as the South African party was intended to be. Yet, it would have been anomalous to have postponed the amalgamation of Het Volk, the Orangia Unie, and the Afrikander Bond, now that one united Government had ruled in South Africa for more than a year. The Congress was an assembly such as one rarely sees. Its numbers alone were imposing, but these would have meant little, had they not included all that was influential among the Dutch and a great many leading English South Africans to boot. Especially Natal and the Witwatersrand had sent prominent contributions in the shape of English-speaking delegates.

As at the National Convention, the difficulties of drafting were great when the mellow spirit prevailing at the Congress had to be translated into tangible results. The Free State had its peculiar standpoint; and the Bond, a little fearful perhaps of the unexampled personal influence wielded by Transvaal Ministers in party affairs, pressed

for a Constitution full of democratically intended safeguards. While noble sentiments were being expounded from the platform, and re-echoed from the body of the large Ramblers' Hall, the spade-work of party making was proceeding in a little committee-room. Some matters were purposely left elastic, so that time might bring counsel, but a framework was evolved; General Smuts had a large share in the planing and joining process to which this was due. General Hertzog made a speech that was generally regarded as the outward and visible sign of his having fallen into line with the Botha current. President Steyn, in a remarkably impressive oration, conducted what was practically the ceremony of the laying on of hands by which General Botha was acclaimed party leader. The breach that had threatened so seriously but two short months ago appeared to have been healed.

Yet the thunderous applause that followed President Steyn's words, "We have the leader, too," as he pointed to General Botha, could not shut out the heavy, rumbling sound of conditional criticism implied in his blessing given to the new order. The "uncrowned king of the Free State" used skilful phrases that faintly and for brief moments illumined the far-off possibilities of the future, as elusive bursts of sheet-lightning penetrate the humpy valleys of summer evening clouds, only to leave the darkness of suspense behind them when their force is spent.

General Smuts was one of those who were called upon to address the gathering. "If anything is worth striving for," he said, "it is worth fighting for, and you will have to fight. . . . The powers opposing the South African spirit are mighty, and our task is a gigantic one. The *first five years* will be the *most critical* in the history of the Union." He expatiated on the obstacles that might trammel their feet, and then uttered the warning with which this chapter begins. There were in his speech even plainer indications of what was actually going on: "The Cabinet is composed of many men of high position. Some of them are advanced

in years, and their hairs have grown grey in the service of the State. But there are younger ones, who are perhaps too energetic, excessively prone to act on the inspiration of the moment. Ours is a very mixed team ; we have men with strong volition, who press their own views ; hence, no absolute unanimity can be asked for. These men are determined to fight for their opinions whenever opportunity offers. There is one test, however, which I hope none of us will fail to pass ; I shall call it that of the South African spirit."

From all this it will be apparent that, if many of the sanguine delegates were building more loosely than they knew, at least one architect was perfectly well aware that his foundations were going to be subjected to an immense strain.

In December 1911 the member for Pretoria West held a meeting at the Capital. General Botha, Mr. Hull, and Advocate Burton were among the many prominent Pretorians on the platform ; General Hertzog happened to have something else to do. The speech of the evening occupied nearly two hours, and dealt frankly with South African interests in general. It is a patriarchal custom with us for M.L.A.'s to "review the past Session with their constituents." In these days of newspapers and telegraph-wires, this is a custom about which one might really say that it is "more honoured in the breach than in the observance." General Smuts found an excellent reason—it will hardly interest the reader to be told exactly what it was—for breaking it. It was his object, he stated, to take stock of the position in order the better to be able to prepare for what lay ahead. The so-called Convention spirit, he found, had largely evaporated, and this reaction, deplorable though it might be, did not surprise him. "Let us talk less of racial differences," he adjured his hearers ; "let us distinguish less often between Dutch and English Afrikanders." He pleaded for a generous treatment of the language question, mentioning the steps that had been taken in three Provinces in order to pacify the British section with regard to education. In discussing the Bloemfontein Congress, he said it was no

more than human if people were assailed at intervals by doubt and disbelief, by strange qualms and moods of uncertainty. All his ardour, however, had reasserted itself at Bloemfontein, and his belief in the future of South Africa had, he assured his audience, become stronger than ever. For the object of that conference was "to get out of the old rut, and to obliterate every bad track of the past." He added that he wished for still greater co-operation between English and Dutch—in politics, in public life generally, and for the building up of a nation.

The Unionists had, shortly before, held a congress at Durban, and Smuts now proceeded to pour ridicule on their deliberations. The rank and file, he said, had insisted on a fighting policy for the Opposition, but Mr. Patrick Duncan, "that canny Scot," had rightly pointed out to them that it was well to know what one was fighting for. "We have protected their mines," the Minister exclaimed, "and by way of reward they are now assailing our land, which they want to tax." Mature reflection had convinced him that white immigration ought to be encouraged, for the census had shown that the ratio between white and black, after having increased steadily in the former's favour for two hundred years, was now receding. It was his endeavour to make South Africa the cradle of a large, white civilized race. The scum of Europe would not be welcomed, nor the scourings of the big cities be received here with open arms, but new blood and new energy were required for the broad acres that were lying fallow. A forced and artificial immigration policy would do harm, however, because thousands of Afrikanders born were unemployed, and unless they were assisted they would become a permanent burden on the community.

And so he dealt with many important topics of the day, reiterating his Durban objection to a "tin-pot navy." [1]

[1] Although little or nothing had been allowed to transpire, General Hertzog had given his friends to understand that if any money were to be spent on the defence of our shores, that money was to go towards the building of a South African navy, as he was totally opposed to an

Defence matters generally then formed the subject of his discourse, and he stated that, while he did not expect any breach of the peace in the immediate future, it was as well to be prepared. South Africa had always suffered from a chapter of accidents, and "one never knew." The speech concluded with the prophecy that South Africa, and parenthetically the town in which he was speaking, would have a future of which Pretorians, in their narrow daily grooves, little dreamt.

The meeting ended dramatically. Several doubtful political friends desired a repetition in Dutch of the main points of the speech, but General Smuts was tired, and the hour was late. There were to be questions, in any case. At the very moment when a beginning was to have been made with these, the chairman (Mr. Edward Rooth, at present one of the South African party whips) read out a telegram announcing the death of Dr. O'Grady Gubbins, Minister without Portfolio. General Smuts immediately rendered eloquent tribute to the great merits of his defunct colleague, and said, in a voice full of emotion, that it was surely impossible for them to continue their little local wrangles after this. But several Pretorians present proved irreverent enough to disregard the tragic event, and there were insistent cries of "Questions!" Mr. Reinhold (now Judge) Gregorowski rose in order to move a vote of thanks, but a local Unionist leader would not allow this. "Oh no, Mr. Chairman," he said, "either we close this meeting at once or we do not; if we do not, there will be questions." The chairman in vain attempted to put down these interruptions. Mr. Gregorowski, whose voice is not powerful, tried equally in vain to make himself heard, and pathos turned into comedy for the moment. At last, the future judge managed to get his words out, and amidst cheers and counter-cheers a memorable meeting came to an end.

The Unionist Press had little that was good to say of

increased naval contribution to the Imperial Exchequer, which was then on the *tapis*.

the Minister's words, and there were some violent attacks. Immigration (into the country districts, be it understood!) has always been a favourite theme with the Unionist majorities in the towns, and a Lloyd cartoon hit the prevalent taste when it showed Botha, Smuts, and Hertzog playing an Immigration Trio. All three had the virtuoso shock of hair, but whereas Smuts played from a score labelled "Immigration," Hertzog took his tune from one entitled "*Ikona* Immigration" (i.e. *No* Immigration). Botha, "doing the Hamlet act," as I believe the technical stage jargon would have it, was guided by a sheet of notes with "Immigration??" written on it. At this time the Cherniavsky brothers were touring South Africa, and to display his punning powers Mr. Lloyd published this fantasy of his as "The Chop-and-Change-aboutsky Trio."

Dingaan's Day the Minister spent at a celebration in the Heidelberg district. This may be recalled in view of the outcry that arose among political opponents when General Botha, prior to his departure for East Africa in 1916, announced a quinquennial official celebration of the festival at Paardekraal for the 16th of December of the current year. It is true that Paardekraal is associated with memories of the 1880–1 war, but Dingaan's Day is essentially a religious holiday with the Boers, instituted nearly eighty years ago, when a vow was made by the hard-pressed band of white immigrants in Natal to keep the day holy if deliverance from the might of the Zulu king was given them. It was probably because many people are unable to divorce religion from extreme puritanism that General Smuts said at Kafferskraal, in December 1911: "Let us be serious, but at the same time do not let us go about with long faces. Let the young men and the young women enjoy each others' company. Let the old men smile and the little children romp. . . . Our sole aim in life should not be material prosperity. Let us aim a little higher. I look forward to the raising of the national character. We should spare no effort or expense to educate our children."

As he had spoken in a premonitory sense to the townspeople, so now he addressed the farmers, adumbrating his military intentions: "To-day everything may be peaceful and quiet; to-morrow the whole atmosphere may be changed. Let us be prepared for any emergency, and teach our young men discipline. Let us work with our new friends. We respect them, but we also respect our traditions, which they will likewise honour."

A shooting competition formed part of the celebrations. General Smuts was given the first shot, and he hit the centre of a heart, painted on the target representing a native.

Shortly afterwards, the centre of interest once again shifted to Cape Town, where the second Session of Parliament was productive of stormy interludes. The *Cape Times* was then one of the strongest anti-Government papers, and in its gallery note one read the following sarcastic remarks: "General Smuts is a much-misunderstood man. It has been popularly supposed that he is a demon for centralization. Never was a greater mistake made! . . . Last year, it is true, he had something to say of the advantages of a system of Oriental despotism; but that was a year ago, and political conversions in South Africa have been achieved in far less than twelve months before now." (They have, too, since these words appeared in the *Cape Times*.)

"Oriental despotism" is a term often applied to General Smuts' methods and predilections. He is not the only one in South Africa, however, to whom recent events have borne the conviction that the divine right of democracy may, in certain circumstances, be open to doubt, and that a multiplication of elected bodies is not an unmixed blessing. Mr. Merriman, in the course of the same Session, had words of praise for General Smuts, in whom he discovered "intellect striving with the natural man."

The *Cape Times* was much more enthusiastic when, in February 1912, the long-looked-for Defence Bill was at last introduced: "If General Smuts had before him a splendid task this afternoon, his severest critics will admit

that it was splendidly performed. The General is not exactly an orator in the sense that Mr. Merriman is, but rhetoric was not necessary to his purpose. For two and a half hours he held the House with a masterly review of the principles governing the defence of South Africa. . . . This astonished a House already fully aware of General Smuts' almost terrible ability and genuine eloquence, prompted not by any conscious effort but by the very nature of the subject. As a physical effort alone it was prodigious. Smuts speaks in a highly pitched but very mellifluous voice, which carries clearly to every part of the House. He hardly paused to consult a note. He never faltered for a moment."

I do not remember whether the last sentence can be taken as literally correct. It is one of the curiosities of General Smuts' achievements that, with all his fluency of delivery, he will sometimes hesitate and halt in the middle of a sentence. This trick of speech is probably not due to absent-mindedness, because it is rarely noticed during a passage that might be considered difficult enough to tax great intellectual powers. Nor would one attribute this occasionally irritating though trifling defect to nervousness. An expert in such matters alone could pronounce an opinion.

If this were a Smuts biography, an outline of his famous Defence Act would have to be given, and with it an extract from his speech, together with an epitome of the debate that followed. Critics arose on his own side of the House, the principal being the late General Beyers, who objected to the Bill as "based on a foreign system." Few serious attempts at amending the measure were made, however, and General Beyers allowed himself to be persuaded, if one may employ a euphemism, to accept the position of Commandant-General of the Burgher Forces. *Die Week*, a young Pretoria newspaper in which General Hertzog was afterwards proved to have been interested, and the editor of which was the Mr. Oost aforementioned, attacked the Bill tooth and nail. No one knew of the Hertzog connection at the time, but the similarity of views, allowing always for the

chastening effect of ministerial responsibility, was striking. Speaking generally, about this time the divergence of policy between the Hertzog and the Smuts wings of the South African party was becoming notorious. The Unionist papers succeeded in making a large amount of capital out of this situation, much of it legitimate capital. It was, of course, General Botha's duty to act as mediator, and to keep together his party by covering up the joints as long as possible. The *Cape Argus* of the 20th of April 1912 published a large cartoon of General Botha's head with a likeness of Smuts in the apple of one eye, and Hertzog's counterfeit presentment in the other; the accompanying legend was "An unfortunate case of political astigmatism."

In April the Minister for the Interior introduced another controversial Bill of a far-reaching character, viz. that on the Public Service of the Union. It was an ingenious piece of work, broadly conceived. Some of the young Unionist forwards were unsparing in their criticisms, and in actual practice the Act has since shown some defects; but the draft was welcomed by the country as a whole, and it added laurels to its author's reputation. This fact is of significance, not only for a judgment of his administrative and legal capacity, but equally as bearing on the relation of the races, which is such a serious bone of contention in the Service.

In May a bombshell burst. There were disruptive powers in the Cabinet besides the hon. member for Smithfield. Provincial, personal, and other causes were at work. Two of the most important members proved to possess incompatible views and temperaments. The late Mr. Sauer, who was a moderate Liberal of the Merriman school, a negrophilist and a man who kept a tight hold on the Cape predominance in railway management, proved the cat to Mr. Hull's dog. The Hon. H. C. Hull, the able Minister of Finance, possessed a tongue that could cut a rhinoceros hide into thin strips. He often wielded this formidable weapon in defence of Transvaal interests

and methods ; hence reservoirs full of tears. One or the other had to leave the Cabinet, and the necessity for making a choice must have been one of the crises in General Botha's life. In the Transvaal, the Botha-Smuts-Hull combination had been a close and a powerful one. The Premier and the Treasurer were (or had been until lately) personal friends. On the other hand, no particular affection, or even markedly cordial political ties, had ever been known to exist between Botha and Sauer. But if Sauer went, the prospect of an almost general Cape secession from the ranks of Government supporters had to be faced. In any case, he had influential friends "at court" ; he would have been a caustic and merciless opponent in the House, with all the *finesse* of long parliamentary experience at his disposal ; and his lifelong friend Mr. Merriman would certainly not have abated his occasional onslaughts on the Government's policy.

Here was a position awkward enough for any man. Of the merits of the dispute between the two peace-breakers it is not necessary to speak here. Mr. Hull had no personal following, and perhaps he was just a little implacable. In any case, it was he who resigned, and when the House met, Sir Thomas Smartt (who had become the leader of the Opposition after Sir Starr Jameson's resignation) lost no time in provoking a sensational set-to. General Smuts added his quota to the discussion ; he spoke as every man in his position would have been obliged to speak. Quoth the *Rand Daily Mail* parliamentary correspondent : "The suave and silky Smuts had a most delicate task, and he walked like Agag. He was precise in his declaration of his agreement with Mr. Hull on most points. Like his chief, however, he thought a little patience exercised on both sides would have confined the conflict to the secret chambers of the Cabinet. . . . Smuts let it be seen quite plainly that in the main he was with Hull more than with Sauer, but there should have been patience, patience, and more patience. . . . Then he began to flounder. . . . A mocking laugh from over the way put him out for a second,

but Jan is a clever debater, and he quickly recovered, only to excite a hurricane of jeering laughter by saying that both disputants were correct in asserting that the programme of railway construction *was* and *was not* discussed and settled by the Cabinet. Mr. Hull smiled broadly at this subtle special pleading by the eminent counsel for the Ministry. Sir Thomas Smartt called out, 'Comic opera, isn't it?' . . . Some one across the floor chipped the General for trying to square the circle. 'I am not,' retorted the Minister; 'I am only trying to do my duty.'"

It is easy to imagine how the cartoonists exploited this incident. "W. A. B." drew a series of skits in the *Rand Daily Mail*, to which he gave the name of "Smuts the Sophist." There is no evidence to show that the victim was much hurt. In any case, he relieved the Cabinet of an immense burden by taking over the portfolio of Finance, for which nobody had been able to assign a holder. It was considered undesirable to introduce fresh blood into the Ministry, and so a wholesale shuffle took place. Mr. Sauer fell from his high pedestal, and had to be satisfied with Agriculture. Mr. Burton, a clever barrister, who at that time had no notion of the motion of a bogie-wheel, took charge of Railways, yielding up Native Affairs to General Hertzog, in whose hands the administration of Justice remained. *De Volkstem* of the 28th of June 1912 recognized the obligation under which General Smuts had placed his colleagues by undertaking the onerous financial work at a moment of great embarrassment. It added, however: "We fancy that Oom Jannie's strong point will not lie in the worrying out of arithmetical and similar problems. To be candid, we regret the diversion of his unmistakable talents and statesmanship to relatively less important duties." Mines went to Mr. Malan (who could consequently shake Mr. Burton's hand in warm sympathy), and the Interior passed to the late Mr. Abraham Fischer, whose age and infirmity hardly enabled him to do justice to its departmental claims. General Smuts retained Defence; and the peculiarity of its combination with Finance, as well as the

Minister's aptitude for the latter, will yet come up for discussion.

It was understood that his accession to the Treasury was of a "temporary nature." And so, rightly considered, are most arrangements in this imperfect world.

XIV

THE TREASURY TO RUSTENBURG

GENERAL SMUTS' Treasurership was unexpected, and caused varied comment. Mr. Ernest Glanville, in the course of a *Sunday Post* (Johannesburg) article, quoted Mr. Merriman to the effect that the Minister was the most distinguished man in South Africa, and then gave the following as his own opinion: "It has been said that he is a man of cold intellect, without any personal following, but his streak of humour rejects that verdict, for a man balanced with humour has the weakness, the strength, and the charm of human nature, which means that he does not stand coldly aloof. It may be that he has more influence with the Opposition than he has with his own back-benchers; and if that is true, it is true not because his intellect is hard, but because it marches ahead of his supporters. His arguments are logical, his style is precise, and his manner disarms opposition, while he can be subtle or obscure."

A few days after this article appeared, the Minister of Defence revealed some of his own thoughts at the opening of the School of Instruction for Staff Officers at Bloemfontein. The occasion furnishes in itself an illustration of his methods, for the Act under which the School was established had only just come into force. He pointed out that there were officers together now who had fought each other for two years; he called this state of affairs miraculous. "The Defence Act," he admitted, "is a very complicated Act, and there are possibly few people who

Photo by G. Ribbink.

GENERAL SMUTS AT RUSTENBURG, DECEMBER 1912.

Two other centre figures Comdt. B. T. J. van Heerden (with helmet) and Mr. Piet Grobler, ex M.L.A.

understand it (laughter). That is probably one of the reasons why I got it through Parliament so quickly (loud laughter and applause). . . . We want a force that will be able to defend South Africa against any one who may come against us. . . . Things may happen that nobody ever foresaw; therefore it behoves us to look forward. . . . At present the nations all seem to be preparing as if doubtful of each other. . . . We want an organization that shall not be Boer or English, but a South African army. . . . Do your duty in a broad, national spirit." He concluded by discouraging talkativeness among his hearers, because men of action were usually apt to use few words. And once more he showed that above all he was not a militarist, but a protagonist of the universal South African sentiment, by urging the officers to do their utmost in bringing about union between the two races.

In August 1912 he spoke at the Centenary of the settlement of Grahamstown. In answer to the toast of his health, he modestly assured the company that the Mayor, who had proposed the toast, had "overdone it; it was extremely distasteful to him to speak in reply to a toast like that." And all those who knew him at all were aware of the truth of these words. However self-assertive Smuts may sometimes appear, his only aim is to press home his convictions; he never seeks personal honour or praise.

The party system, he said at Grahamstown, we had copied from England, and, like most of the old principles that South Africa borrowed from Europe, it did not apply to this country. The presence of a great black population and a small white community "vitiated the application of European political principles to our circumstances. . . . Other lines of cleavage would develop, because they would always have the passions, the ignorance, and the stupidity of human nature to form parties and sections." This was a bold pronouncement, but it undoubtedly suited the frame of the celebrations then taking place in the "City of Saints," with its precious historical associations and its important scholastic establishments.

During the next month he was again present at a ceremony where a lofty tone prevailed : the opening of the Pretoria Picture Gallery. Here he reproved commercialism and lack of taste by telling his hearers that he had once inspected the collection of a South African multi-millionaire in London ; the only questions he had been asked were : "What do you think I gave for this?" and "What do you think this costs?"[1]

The *Sunday Post* of the 6th of October drew attention to a feature of the political situation that was fast developing as follows : "It would appear that General Smuts is getting himself disliked amongst the racialists and extremists. He was to have addressed the Congress of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Vrouwen Federatie the other evening, but at the last moment, or very nearly, wired the Federatie that he found it impossible to come over to Johannesburg. . . . When the Congress assembled the next morning, it was proposed and carried, amidst sarcastic laughter, that an ironical reply-paid telegram should be sent to the General, expressing grief at his illness, and hoping he had quite recovered."[2]

In the beginning of November 1912 a Smuts-Hertzog-Malan trio journeyed from Pretoria to Johannesburg in order to assist at the foundation meeting of the first South African Party Club. The proceedings were enthusiastic, although Government supporters were in a ferment over General Hertzog's recent Nylstroom speech, containing the famous "foreign adventurer" allusion. Mr. Malan now played the part so prominently taken by General Smuts

[1] A friend of General Smuts', who visited the Louvre with him, has stated that his artistic appreciation is exceptionally keen for a layman who has limited opportunities of coming into contact with collections of pictures. Once he knew the name of the painter who was responsible for a notable canvas, he would pick out unhesitatingly pieces from the same artist's brush.

[2] It would be a mistake to suppose that the South African Women's Federation was, or is, composed of racialists or extremists exclusively. It is possible, however, that there was a sufficiently strong infusion of the element in question at the Congress to make it excusable for the Minister to contract rather suddenly a diplomatic illness.

at Bloemfontein in 1911, by warning their Johannesburg followers that there might shortly be schisms. He asked them not to let that disturb them or cause a rift in the new Club lute. General Smuts did not refer to the darkening of the political sky.[1]

On the 7th of November General Smuts once more addressed his constituents from the Pretoria Town Hall platform. A condemnatory reference to General Hertzog's unceasing campaign against the leading convictions of his colleagues was contained in the statement that "he almost agreed with Mr. Merriman in deprecating a surfeit of public speeches (laughter). . . . The future held a heavy burden of difficulties and trouble. As long as strength was given him, he would combat these. . . . There would be difficulties within the South African party and within the Government, but he asked them to stand firm."

On the old immigration question he reaffirmed the necessity for increasing the white population, but dwelt more than formerly on the ease with which one might make mistakes in trying to achieve this object. He was optimistic concerning the future even of the Kalahari, but considered it impossible to send newcomers there or to relegate them to regions where the malarial mosquito held sway. Speaking generally, he adopted a cautious tone by advising slowness, carefulness, and a disinclination to rely on legislation. There was also a particularly guarded pronunciation with regard to naval matters.

[1] In view of General Smuts' share in the decision that led to the partial break-up of the Cabinet in December, General Hertzog's action in November is interesting. At the meeting in question, held in the afternoon, he commended to a thoroughly mixed audience of English and Dutch the idea of social co-operation in a club. In the evening he addressed a Dutch meeting at the Johannesburg suburb of Vrededorp, a name meaning Peacetown, by the way. He then enunciated his celebrated doctrine of the two streams; he advised his hearers "not to mix up the two unnecessarily"; he likened the members of one nationality who were found among those of another nationality to "caked manure adhering to a kraal wall. The pieces might stick to the wall while they were desiccated, but the first freshet would wash them off, for dung would never become transubstantiated into stone."

On this occasion no South African politician was obliging enough to time his decease conveniently to shield a diplomatic Minister from awkward questions. The Unionists had come prepared with a whole string of these, bearing chiefly on the Hertzog gospel, as preached at Nylstroom and Vrededorp. General Hertzog, needless to say, was not on the platform ; his colleague, while fencing with admirable coolness and dexterity, was unable to keep off all the raindrops composing such a tropical shower. There was unrestrained gaiety when he evaded giving an opinion on the Minister of Justice's references to "bastard sheep" and kraal manure, by asking the hecklers to look upon these as "veld similes" and nothing further. But he volunteered the admission that such metaphor was not eminently suitable for keeping people in a sweet temper ; as for himself, he added, he did not use it.

When hard pressed for a definite "yes" or "no" as to whether he approved of the Hertzog terminology and everything it implied, he claimed that these were questions of taste, not necessarily indicating political conviction. He succeeded in holding his own without either swallowing unpalatable matter or censuring his fellow-Minister. It was unfair, he said at last, with his back to the wall, to ask numerous questions about the speeches of a colleague, which were not the subject of the evening's discussion ; his hecklers should confine themselves to his (Smuts') own misdeeds. It may be noted in passing that General Smuts did not seek refuge behind the supposed shortcomings of reporters, which had been a sure shield for some South African party politicians during the Hertzog controversy.

There was a brief period of comparative peace in South Africa until the priest of Separatism, on the invitation of Mr. Piet Grobler, M.L.A., selected the hamlet of Dewildt for the impassioned horn-blowing that unmistakably rent the walls of the South African party edifice, letting in an amount of cold air that proved of the severest consequence to the health of the inmates. Important Cabinet meetings began immediately after General Hertzog had laid down his

theories as to Imperial obligations—or their absence—on South Africa's part. For five days no more than a few people at Pretoria knew of the struggle that was raging behind closed doors; the public were in profound ignorance. It was a week after the Dewildt speech when the first hint of serious trouble was given by *De Volkstem* in a leading article, containing suggestions of "dark clouds" overhanging the future. The next morning Lord Gladstone, who happened to be at Kimberley, returned to Pretoria on an urgent wire from General Botha. The Minister for Justice would not resign, and so the Prime Minister was obliged to hand in his own resignation. For several days, while the late Mr. Fischer was making up his mind, there was no Ministry at all. The meaning of the crisis soon became apparent, but in spite of all that had happened, the shock to Dutch-speaking South Africa was severe. Most of the Government's supporters refused to believe that the fateful step of ejecting Hertzog had been taken, and authoritative explanations were eagerly looked for. General Botha, as the Minister most nearly concerned, at the last moment cancelled an appointment to participate in the Dingaan's Day celebrations with his constituents. General Hertzog went to Zoutpansberg, where he delivered a speech that was taken as an indication that a settlement might possibly be arrived at.

General Smuts appeared at Paardekraal on the 16th of December. He had made a last attempt to avoid a breach, Mr. Fischer had conveyed a letter, drafted by the Minister of Defence, to General Hertzog, whose signature would have involved an undertaking not to hold forth without the knowledge and approval of his chief on questions such as those he had treated at Dewildt. But General Hertzog scorned to acknowledge Cabinet solidarity by putting his name to this document, and he has more than once savagely attacked General Smuts for daring to have it placed before him. General Smuts, a year afterwards, took full responsibility for the letter, adding that, had be been in General Hertzog's place, he would not have hesitated a moment before signifying in this manner his submission to joint authority.

This was the position—although the details were not known at the time—when Smuts came to Paardekraal. He explained that he was to have gone to the Cape in order to inaugurate a monument to his comrades who fell in the Boer War; owing to the crisis, however, he had sent a deputy. In the course of an earnest speech he exalted the virtues of the Boer ancestors whose heroism had led to the event they were celebrating, and had made the spread of civilization in the interior a matter of possibility. It was a day for reflection, he said, for they lived in an age of hard work, and often grudged themselves the leisure that is indispensable to deep thought. He recognized that serious problems awaited solution, but, making a virtue of necessity, he thanked Providence for having saved South Africa from the fate of many a country whose inhabitants led monotonous, drab lives. Here we always had something with which to occupy our minds; and this life had a goal and a savour. After the roaring storms of the past, the soft voice of peace had come, whispering counsel of co-operation and brotherliness. Let them banish bitterness and recrimination, for only in that way were greatness and prosperity to be attained. Neither Boer nor Briton was to strive for supremacy, lest a divided South African people should become the tool of other nations. Sacrifices would have to be made in order to steer clear of such a fate; potentially they were encased in the Defence Act, for "*si vis pacem. . . .*" The future looked black, but he felt sure that the Transvaal at least would act as it had always acted, sensibly and circumspectly.

Mindful of the object of this book, I must omit a discussion concerning the reconstruction of the Cabinet; the controversies that arose; the wave of feeling that swept over Hertzog's followers, especially in the Free State; the actions and reactions—political, social, ethnological—of that disturbed period in our history. No effort has been made in these pages to supply even a brief account of the various causes, personal and otherwise, that led up to the crisis, the consequences of which are met with at every street-corner

in South Africa to-day.* But, writing without any special knowledge of that aspect of the case, I make bold to assume that Smuts' inflexible determination was one of the principal factors in the Cabinet's decision of December 1912. Whether its full import was realized, whether any influential party men were sounded, I have no means of knowing, but one fact stands out with absolute clearness to him whose vision is unclouded : it was intolerable for the Botha Cabinet to continue on the road it had been travelling ; it was impossible for Hertzog's colleagues to have their policy held up to ridicule by him, publicly, constantly, and yet to maintain their self-respect as statesmen and as men. Hertzog's excellent qualities did not include the ability to play Cabinet cricket. He allowed himself to be goaded into desperate action by the incessant, merciless attacks in the Unionist Press, which might well have unsettled a more balanced personality.

Smuts never for a moment shirked his responsibilities. On the 27th of December he addressed a meeting at Rustenburg, the centre of one of the most conservative districts of the Transvaal. The majority of the men who had listened to the Dewildt oration were present. The meeting was athrob with barely suppressed excitement. After a few introductory words by the chairman, the Rev. Mr. Vorster—a local clergyman who is now M.L.A. for Burgersdorp, Cape—jumped up. Curtly, morosely, he asked the Minister to refrain from discussing the crisis, and so to avoid giving offence. The chairman answered that General Smuts could discuss what he liked, but the latter, who is an adept at gauging the temper of any assembly, in dulcet tones assured the interrupter that he would not deal with the crisis.

And then he read the Rustenburgers a lecture that was masterly in its suggestiveness, for although he said all he had come to say, not even the Rev. Mr. Vorster could take offence. It was the Boer General who spoke rather than the Union Minister. He recalled the war and his own exploits in that very district. He poignantly appealed to his Transvaalers for continued support. He pleaded his

inability to become alienated from them, because if he did he would have to prove false to his own past. He traced the course of events since Vereeniging. He impressed on them the miraculousness of self-government within five years of war. He attributed the marvel to General Botha and his conciliation policy, which had won first of all the powers in England, and then a section of the British in South Africa. He laid stress on his own duty of ruminating on affairs of State. He affirmed that one, and only one, policy seemed to him to be possible in South Africa—the Botha policy. He likened the Boers to a nation who had been led to lofty pinnacles, whence they had an unobstructed view of the land below. He regretted the creeping up of "an evil spirit, a murky mist of suspicion and disruption," which was enveloping the mountain and obscuring the grand prospect. He predicted that, a hundred years hence, our progeny would cudgel their brains to discover what it was that had set brother against brother, father against son, section against section, though intrinsically they were of the same blood and the same faith. He invoked the spirit of the black hordes swarming around those inhabitants of a border district, in order to make them understand the absolute necessity for internal peace if they were successfully to resist possible attacks from outside.

He spoke long, he spoke earnestly, he spoke convincingly. But the questions that were asked before the meeting concluded gave evidence of the doubt that remained. The dragon had been scotched, not killed. As for Smuts himself, he had burnt his boats behind him—if there could be any question of such a conflagration in his case—for one of his sentences at Rustenburg was capable of bearing the interpretation that he warned any colleagues of his who might possibly be tempted into compromise on essentials that Jan Smuts, at any rate, would stand firm on the rockiest of shores, and that to him there was no looking back towards the stormy seas he had sailed in the past.

XV

RUSTENBURG TO A HOSTILE CONSTITUENCY

At Rustenburg, if not before, General Smuts must have realized that the expulsion of General Hertzog from the Cabinet, however necessary it might have been, had made a profound impression on the countryside. In fact, for some time the Government did not quite know how it stood with its supporters; and there were thousands in South Africa who were in the like predicament with regard to their own feelings. General Hertzog himself experienced the reverse of Balaam's fate, for he went to Smithfield to give his late colleagues a variegated blessing, but when the applause of his constituents mounted to his head, he delivered himself of the most virulent denunciation ever launched by a South African statesman against recent collaborators. General Smuts was studiously moderate in all his references to his new opponent, although he was often singled out for attack. The "Billingsgate" he had deplored in 1910 never crept into his own utterances. Conspicuous for moral courage, he avoided as far as possible any collision with the Hertzog following, preferring silence, or at most an occasional sly hit.

In March 1913 he confessed at a manufacturers' dinner, held at Cape Town, that "the Government had its troubles and difficulties, but he was sure that, like the British Empire, it would muddle through (laughter). If he were asked what was most necessary to South Africa, he would answer: not politics, or even statesmanship, but production.

There were some to whom the blessed word 'protection' was a talisman like 'Mesopotamia,' but many of our economic ills could not be cured by any large amount of protection. Our gold had changed South Africa from one of the cheapest countries in the world to one of the dearest —a circumstance militating strongly against the development of industry in general. And, as long as the cost of living remained high, it might prove impossible to make any far-reaching alteration in our economic conditions."

The speech suffered a little from that vague optimism which he is sometimes tempted to adopt, but may be accepted as an explanation of the seeming supineness towards industrial development that is frequently urged against the Botha-Smuts Government. His economic and financial policy generally found many opponents. The *Sunday Post* of the 16th of March 1913 was uncomplimentary enough to say: "The man who can do everything else, and run the Treasury as well, has yet to be born. It is pretty obvious from his Budget speech that Smuts is not that man. His first Budget is a hash. . . . His Estimates would be featureless, if they were not reckless." This was an extreme view, but the Unionists, who were hard put to it now that General Hertzog had left the Cabinet to find justification for attempting to pulverize the Government, were delighted to find in the latter's "extravagance"—as they have never ceased calling it—a fruitful source of criticism. In the *Cape Times* the Treasurer was caricatured as a rake, who delighted in scattering money. The output of cartoons increased owing to General Hertzog's violent campaign against Ministers. Smuts nearly always figured in these graphic representations of the struggle; the leading place, next to Botha, was assigned to him. Among the Dutch section of the electorate his views on nationality and race began to be meticulously scrutinized. *De Volkstem* was induced by the microscopic tactics of his opponents to reprint the Grahamstown speech of 1912 in order to show its innocuousness. On the 16th of May 1913 a meeting of certain of his constituents

passed a vote of censure in his absence, owing to his attitude in the Hertzog dispute.

In Parliament there were not many frank debates on the subject, nor could General Hertzog persuade a substantial number of Free State members to stand by him. Yet, a dull and leaden atmosphere hung over the deliberations. There were caucus meetings and negotiations in plenty, but the work of the Session suffered from partial paralysis, and the legislative harvest was small.

Suddenly, almost without warning, a thunderclap reverberated through the length and breadth of the land. The Session had barely concluded when, early in July, disturbances consequent upon a miners' strike broke out. It is impossible here either to delve into their history or to give an adequate picture, however brief, of the Witwatersrand while they lasted. The miners may or may not be right when they contend that, unless the action of the Kleinfontein Mine management (which led to the quarrel) had met with stern counter-action on their part, the whole future of the Labour movement would have been jeopardized. No sympathy will be expressed here with one party or another on the original issue. Nor would it be useful to inquire into the action or inaction of the Mines Department, which has been accused of failing to protect the workers' rights. All that would have been legitimate matter for controversy if the party considering itself aggrieved had adopted legitimate means of obtaining redress. But it did not. And that is where General Smuts comes into the story. In the words of one of the leaders of the movement, who harangued a crowd on the Johannesburg Market Square, Government found itself confronted not with a strike so much as with a revolution! In that light all its steps of July 1913, including those of doubtful wisdom, must be considered.

The police forcibly dispersed a mass meeting; the crowd set fire to public and other buildings; the Rand Club and other centres were in imminent danger of sharing the same fate; atrocities were perpetrated by genuine working men

as well as by loafers and ruffians on the Reef ; the natives in the mine compounds adopted a threatening attitude.[1]

The Defence Force was as yet in its infancy, and quite unprepared for such a sudden call. The Governor-General, at the request of General Smuts (one of the few Ministers who were back at Pretoria), authorized the use of Imperial troops. These, after due warning, fired on the crowds. There was a regrettable, though humanly speaking unavoidable, number of casualties among the usual curious onlookers. I shall not attempt to account for the abnormal psychological condition of the populace. The rowdy element must have been numerous on the Rand to be able to cause such a state of affairs. The ravages of miners' phthisis undoubtedly were largely responsible for it. As is customary in connection with outbreaks of this nature, those who were shot down were afterwards canonized as martyrs, without inquiry as to whether they had helped to attack the police with broken bottles or the troops with revolver shots. It will be sufficient if the statement is made here that, from whatever cause arising, the position in Johannesburg was one of extreme gravity when Generals Botha and Smuts personally intervened. The local authority had lost control ; when night fell on the 4th of July, fresh scenes of carnage and arson were feared. In addition, there was good reason for apprehension regarding the safety of the gold mines. On the Rand, so much dynamite is able to pass unchecked into the possession of miners, that no one could say where the danger began or ended. On the 5th of July the two

[1] A few months afterwards, a Russian anarchist of my acquaintance told me that he made no secret of having been one of the men whose task it was to incite the mine Kaffirs to "take a hand in the game." It would be superfluous even to hint at the consequences, especially to the women and children, that success on his part would have had. There is no proof that Labour organizations had anything to do with this dastardly attempt, which was certainly not countenanced by responsible political leaders. In bare justice to the men whose duty it was to restore order out of the terrible chaos then prevailing it is necessary, however, to draw attention to this dangerous aspect of the situation.

Ministers literally took their lives in their hands when they motored into Johannesburg without escort. The story of how they first met the mine-owners, who had taken refuge in the suburb of Orange Grove, and then interviewed the strike leaders at the Carlton Hotel has been told so often that it needs no repetition in these pages. The version of the latter interview, as supplied by the subsequent deportee, J. T. Bain, differs considerably from the official one. If one is to believe Bain's own words, he openly threatened Botha and Smuts with instantaneous extinction at the point of his revolver if the troops in the street outside—whose officers were not aware of the negotiations—fired another shot. One fact stands out clearly, viz. that both the Generals behaved with the utmost coolness amidst surroundings that might well have cowed the bravest of the brave. The noise, the excitement, the company in which they found themselves, were all such that the attempt to reach a settlement must even now be regarded as having been a sheer gamble, with all the odds against freedom from an accident, which might at any moment prove fatal to one or more of the principal actors. When the "Bain Treaty" had been signed, the two Ministers rode back to Orange Grove without police protection in order to arrange for a definite form of agreement between the contending parties.

The course of events on the days that followed will not be traced in these pages, but it will contribute to an understanding of Smuts and the way in which we in South Africa regard him if two prominent facts are noted. One is that the country was astounded when it was made acquainted with the terms of the document to which he had put his signature at the Carlton Hotel: for one brief moment it looked as if he had abdicated real political power in favour of the captains of the rabble. The other fact is that the Fabianism with which he is so well able to interlard his active periods, when the times demand it, never became more prominent than in the couple of months following this tremendous outburst.

On the 31st of July, in the House of Commons, Mr. L. Harcourt, as Colonial Secretary, defended Lord Gladstone from the charges made against His Excellency in connection with the use of Imperial troops at Johannesburg. Mr. Harcourt, while giving expression to his own extreme reluctance to sanction the employment of military forces in civil disturbance, declared the abortive revolution to have been one of those occasions when such employment was "not merely permissible but obligatory."

In September 1913 General Smuts spoke at a Johannesburg police function. He congratulated the men on "the courage and discretion shown during the disturbances" in the face of the criticism levelled against them, and said: "If there is one place in the world requiring careful police handling, it is Johannesburg. It has drawn from all parts of the world elements of a disorderly character. Unless the police are up to the highest mark, I can see sad times in store for the town and its surroundings." He showed plainly that he felt himself master of the situation once more, and encouraged the police to take any grievances they might have "right to the fountain-head." They must be, he argued, a contented force, for then "they would be ready to face any trouble that might be in store for Johannesburg and South Africa. Not that he really anticipated trouble, but they knew that in some senses the town was a volcano, and sometimes it ran over. In fact, it wanted watching."

As usual, he saw the difficulties that were ahead, never flattering himself for a moment that, because he had stamped out the trouble by force, it would subside for good and all. The general condition of the country at this time was an unenviable one. In September Mr. Burton returned from a holiday. A *Sunday Times* cartoon represented Burton as finding Smuts recuperating in a patient's easy-chair, a towel wound round his head, and ice placed on its crown; four portfolios reclining in his lap; cloths covering his wounded legs; a book entitled *General Bottle-Washer* in one hand, and severe stomachic disorder written plainly on his features.

Depression reigned in South Africa; the unemployed wailed; the unemployable agitated; uncertainty stalked everywhere; we were all carrying on a hand-to-mouth existence. Enter, at this interesting period in our history, a company of immaculately equipped guests, members of the Empire Parliamentary Association, on recreation bent. Doubtless there was a little political business, even a trifling amount of commercial solidity, commingled with the recreation. The distinguished guests were banqueted at Pretoria. Who should have presided but General Smuts? What should have been his cue but one of almost complete detachment from the unfortunate domestic situation in which our three-cornered family quarrels had landed us? But he could not resist the temptation of having his good-humoured fling at globe-trotting Imperial philosophy. "Our visitors," he remarked in his most solemn and suave tone, "are going to stay just long enough to become extremely well informed on our extremely complex problems and to be able to draw useful comparisons." The other Dominions, he was pleased to see, had progressed; South Africa had made but "puny efforts. Everything here seems to be in a different key and on a different level. We are about the only young country where you will find serious people doubtful about the ultimate progress of the country. South Africa has its sphinx-like problems." And then he stated his reasons for optimism. In June 1902 "we started from zero. The country was a wilderness, a desert. A few cities were peopled, and they watched for the conclusion of things. We had a few concentration camps, and everywhere else—wilderness! . . . The work since then has been very great. . . . We have had little difficulties and differences, but a great battle has been fought and won. The people of South Africa, British and Dutch or of other descent, are on the way to becoming one nation."

He thanked the Imperial Government for its trust, which had made this result possible, and continued: "South Africa is interesting to live in. We have problems that

appear insolvable. These will breed a race of men and women above material things. It is not the laws of political economy, or copy-book maxims, that settle problems. We are on a different basis, for our problems are affected by obscure factors that do not present themselves in other parts." He wound up by emphasizing the difficulty involved in gaining a triumph for white civilization, and at the same time "squaring these ideals with the ethical principle that we have brought to this country."

Lord Emmott, who responded, bore eloquent testimony to "the brilliant speech of General Smuts." Lord Sheffield said "it was the most remarkable speech they had heard on their tour." In these opinions the reader would probably concur, if space allowed its reproduction in full.

At the end of the same month the hon. member for Pretoria West faced a different audience. The branches of the South African party in his constituency had asked him to explain certain matters. This party still included the Hertzogites, for the split was not yet pronounced among the rank and file. Smuts accepted the invitation, and frankly recognized that there was dissatisfaction. He quoted *The Living Wage* in condemnation of Johannesburg Labour methods. He was pressed to touch on the Cabinet question, but excused himself. Every one knew where he stood, he explained, and it was undesirable to probe recent wounds while a healing salve might yet be discovered. "To him it was not a personal question, but purely and simply a matter affecting the future of South Africa. He bitterly regretted that the letter submitted to General Hertzog by Mr. Fischer had never been published," because it would have vindicated his (Smuts') position. He deprecated further discussion of this subject unless one of his hearers could suggest something practical.

A large hostile element asserted itself strongly at the meeting, although the Minister was treated with a fair amount of courtesy. In the end, a resolution endorsing President Steyn's advice, to the effect that General Botha should resign as the leader of the South African party, was

adopted by a large majority. In other words, General Smuts had obtained an adverse vote from his own party in his constituency. Interruptions and demonstrations increased before the meeting concluded, but the Minister never changed countenance. At last, one of his opponents moved a vote of thanks; a tactless supporter proposed a vote of confidence as an amendment. Smuts seized his walking-stick, exclaimed that no further votes were required, and left the hall.

Emboldened by success, the gentleman who had been instrumental in organizing this temporary and local defeat published, on the 30th of October, a statement to the effect that our then Chief Justice, the late Lord De Villiers, had once said: "Hertzog never told a lie. Smuts does not know what truth is." On the 20th November, Lord De Villiers wrote from Bloemfontein to a Smuts supporter (who had the letter published): "I can assure you that it is entirely untrue that I ever used the words attributed to me."

This little episode shows the spirit in which the miners and sappers in the new "Nationalist" army were beginning their work.

XVI

A HOSTILE CONSTITUENCY TO THE *UMGENI*

In January 1914 the second great strike came as a trial of strength between a Government, weakened by secessions, and the State within the State which it was sought to establish. The ostensible cause of this upheaval was an announcement, made some months before by the General Manager of Railways, that some hundreds of his men would be discharged. The Minister of Railways, a little later, attempted to alleviate the feeling caused by this event, and mentioned a smaller number of men. This by no means satisfied the Society of Railway and Harbour Servants—the opportunity for a more successful tussle appeared to the keepers of the working men's conscience to have come.

No opinion will be expressed here on the merits of the original question. On the one hand it was alleged that the railways were overstaffed, and that in any case, once the statement had been published, no responsible Minister could afford to allow matters to be taken out of his hands, as he would be doing by reversing his decision. On the other side it was contended that the enormous sums paid for overtime alone showed that the railways were understaffed; that the move was part of a larger one, aimed at the existing standard of wages and working conditions; that Government was playing the game of the big private employers, and that nothing short of a strike by the whole of the railway staff would bring Ministers to their senses. I shall not presume to judge as between these two attitudes.

I do not even know whether the Cabinet's considered policy was in the direction of the proposed wholesale dismissal or whether the "watertight compartment" method of arriving at important decisions, mentioned by the late Mr. Sauer at the time of the Hull crisis, was still in vogue.

In any case, it was the bounden duty of Ministers to see their colleague through, once the quarrel had become critical, if only because in a country of immense distances, not served by waterways, the rail is a vital means of communication; the many social and other ramifications of a railway strike could only be excused by the very gravest of reasons. And, although there undoubtedly existed sincere indignation among the staff at the Government's action, the public at large were as truly convinced that the remedy was too heroic for the disease. General Botha's special train, by which he returned from the opening of a new line in the South-Eastern Transvaal, had only just returned to Pretoria when the men went on strike. A fatal mistake was made by the leaders at the outset, because they had not made sure of all their followers, and the strike was neither so unanimous nor quite so sudden as it should have been, from their standpoint. But it soon became apparent that the bulk of employees in all departments were "coming out," and that the service could not be maintained. There was some violence used in pulling "scabs" from engines and away from railway premises, but generally speaking orderliness was observed. General Smuts was not blinded to the seriousness of the situation by these peaceful appearances. He made personal inquiries as to the likelihood of the movement being maintained. As soon as he had satisfied himself on this point, he made up his mind. Without an instant's delay, telegrams were dispatched mobilizing the burgher forces. This time he was not going to call on the Imperial troops. He had seen the storm approaching, and he was ready for it.

Railway traffic between Pretoria and Johannesburg was already interrupted when the leaders of the Rand Federation of Trades decided that the moment had come for regaining

what they had lost by the sanguinary fiasco of 1913. A general strike was proclaimed in order to demonstrate the solidarity of Labour. Mr. Poutsma, then the virtual dictator of the Railway and Harbour Servants' Society, has since stated that, so far from acting at his request, the Johannesburg trades union leaders were merely making fools of themselves, and of him too. Be that as it may, matters looked extremely critical, and the most violent speeches were made by demagogues in their shirt-sleeves haranguing street mobs when I arrived in Johannesburg on the evening of the day on which the die was cast. This personal evidence is given here because the Socialist element has done its very best to damn the subsequent deportation, and to ridicule the mobilization, by describing the strike as an eminently pacific measure, calculated not to harm the proverbial fly. They point, of course, to the absence of fighting on this occasion, and are fond of representing General Smuts as having acted with altogether disproportionate rigour and show of force. The truth is that no one could have answered for the consequences if the temper in which Labour and its sympathizers thought and asked in January 1914 had not been curbed by the very wise precautionary measures adopted by the Minister of Defence. A few of the men in khaki acted rashly. On the East Rand, at Germiston, for instance, there was some ground for complaint; and owing to the lightning speed with which a civil organization adapted to the circumstances had to be evolved—such conditions always create confusion, for however long they are foreseen—minor mistakes were made elsewhere. These cannot be compared, however, with the terrible abuse of temporary power that was made by the opposite side five or six months previously.

At Germiston, the centre of our railway system and the most important junction in South Africa, the railwaymen showed their teeth in unmistakable fashion. An attack on the vulnerable points of the Administration's property was feared, with good reason. A military authority issued the order "Do not hesitate to shoot." General Smuts was

afterwards challenged on this point in Parliament. He took full responsibility for the message conveyed to his fighting force. It appeared that he had not personally sent it, but the situation warranted strong measures, he said, and the men in uniform had every right to use their weapons if public property were assailed.

I saw him in January as, with General Botha, he visited the headquarters of the semi-military committee that had been placed in charge of the Witwatersrand civil administration. Their danger was less than it had been in 1913, but every one in the Transvaal knows these two men by sight, and they certainly took a considerable risk in driving through the streets of Johannesburg in a motor-car. Danger, however, seemed farthest from their thoughts. Smuts showed that he not only had a grip of the situation as a whole, but that he could find time to spare for detail; and that was by no means a superfluous gift, for the Johannesburg officials were overworked and overwrought. Stringent regulations under martial law had been drawn up, and one could not legally draw an abnormally heavy breath without requiring a permit! This caused the authorities so much purely clerical work that they were not sure whether they were standing on their heads or on their heels. General Smuts was coolness personified; with his usual buoyant optimism he answered, when I asked him whether the men and horses he had conjured up from the veld were well looked after and in good condition: "Eerste klas; spekvet" (First-class; sleek and fat).

The issue was in doubt for a couple of days, but when General De la Rey trained his guns on the Trades Hall, the men of the lolling tongues surrendered. As the railwaymen saw that the "general" strike was an unmitigated failure, they too caved in. The trades union leaders were furious. The more dangerous among them were arrested, and the Cabinet thought it necessary, if the country were to be saved from economic ruin consequent upon lasting and violent agitation, to deport nine of them on the

s.s. *Umgeni*. There was an application to the Courts to intervene, but General Smuts had left nothing to chance —it was too late! Judge Wessels issued a dignified protest from the Bench against Oom Jannie's hustling management, but the ship had sailed.[1]

It is not to be supposed that General Smuts believed that he had crushed the Labour movement. What he had frustrated was another scheme to gain by intimidation and force what should come about by constitutional methods. It was in the security of this knowledge that, on the 26th of January, he addressed the special constables who had enrolled at Johannesburg in order to assist the Government. "Some months ago," he reminded them, "we had a very severe lesson as to what might happen. We were determined that no repetition of lawlessness should occur. . . . If we have learned the lesson of the past, we shall do our best to *remain* organized and watchful for the future." He also thanked the Committee of Public Safety, pointing with satisfaction to the entire absence of bloodshed.

When Parliament met, a few days afterwards, the Minister of Defence had to face it with a request for a double indemnity. On the 4th of February 1914 he moved the second reading of the Bill ratifying the Government's actions. During the preceding three or four days of the Session several attempts had been made by Mr. Creswell (who proved a veritable Boanerges), as well as by Unionist leaders, to wring a statement from Smuts at an earlier stage in the history of the Bill, but without avail. He was not to be hurried or flustered. When he did speak, he held the

[1] The events connected with the deportation, and the impression it produced in South Africa as well as elsewhere, are still fresh in the public memory. It would therefore be superfluous to dwell on the stupefying effect of this remarkable defiance of ordinary procedure by the subject of this book. But, unforeseen as this mild punishment without trial was by the general public, it was fairly well known in Government circles that the step was contemplated. I may perhaps be excused for mentioning that I predicted it in the columns of a Cape newspaper several days before it took place. In the hurly-burly of those days the prophecy passed unnoticed.

floor for three hours and a half. The *Cape Times* said of this remarkable feat of endurance: ". . . To speak for such a time, and hold the rapt attention of full benches and crowded galleries, is more than a considerable intellectual and rhetorical achievement." The paper did not fail to mention that "very little fresh evidence had been produced." In fact, I remember a friend of Smuts, who had been craning his neck to catch the sensational disclosures we all expected, remarking: "When it takes Jannie three hours and a half to speak, he cannot have anything to say."

Yet, the speech was a masterly one, and the meagre abstract for which there is space in these pages is very far from doing it justice. He plunged *in medias res* by declaring at the outset that the crisis through which South Africa had passed was of world-wide interest and quite unexampled in history; for syndicalists and anarchists had always looked on the weapon of a general strike as their last resort, something to be prayed for, but not to be really expected, like the Second Advent. The events of January did not stand alone: they were the culminating point in a great scheme. He traced the happenings of 1913, drew attention to the violence then employed, underlined the reckless words of the trades union leaders, and called Johannesburg the "Mecca of the Hooligan"—the last place in the world whose Labour deputies should quote Magna Charta and constitutional rights, as Mr. Creswell had so valiantly done. "One of the hardest things I ever had to do," he said, "was to put my name to an agreement with Mr. Bain, but I have learnt that in this life humiliation and disgrace are sometimes necessary in order to effect a great public service." A more sinister figure than Bain, he thought, was Poutsma. When Poutsma appeared on the scene, he (Smuts) knew that serious trouble was ahead.[1]

[1] Mr. H. J. Poutsma, after experiencing difficulties in Holland in connection with Socialist propaganda "of the Deed," came to South Africa. He was in charge of a Free State ambulance during the Boer War; showed great energy and enterprise in the Republican service; founded a short-lived labour colony on the Basuto border after the war; became

Government had shown its desire to remedy grievances as soon as practicable, but that was the very result the syndicalist leaders wished to avoid. He was particularly emphatic as to the syndicalist nature of the conspiracy which, he claimed, had been unearthed. Poutsma had forced the pace all the time, had baulked several attempts at a successful settlement, and had systematically encouraged the class war.

Here the speech broke off, and the House adjourned. The *Cape Times* declared that the Minister had shown "all the skill of a consummate controversialist not only thoroughly conversant with his subject but—which is not always the case with the General—absolutely convinced of the righteousness of his case."

The *Rand Daily Mail* (which had published a cartoon showing Smuts in the act of "smashing the Constitution" with the Deportation sledge-hammer) contained the following gallery note: "... He had on his desk a formidable pile of documents, but, as usual, his actual notes were scanty. ... Every incident, big or little, was fitted carefully into its right place in the picture. ... One phrase he used early, and he seemed to like its flavour so much that he repeated it many times, whenever one of the deportees happened to be considered. It was: 'A gentleman on the honoured list contained in the Schedule to this Bill.' ... The whole speech was to my mind that of an advocate keen on presenting the strongest possible case to a jury not certain to

a Progressive journalist at Bloemfontein, and afterwards a Young South African (Dutch) writer in the same town; displayed rare organizing talent in his capacity as Secretary to the Railwaymen's Society at Pretoria, and counselled passive resistance when the strike was proclaimed. At present he is Secretary to the Nationalist party of the Transvaal and a strong anti-militarist. During the 1915 General Election he stood as a candidate at Krugersdorp, where he promised England every aid in the war. He is a charming *causeur*, a trenchant writer, a hopeless *enfant terrible* as a speaker, a man of infinite ambition who would have opposed General Smuts at Pretoria West in 1915 if the Nationalists had accepted him as a candidate there. His principal grievance against Smuts seems to be that he was sent to Europe on the *Umgeni* in such very mixed company.

convict, and needing the spur of appeal to sentiment or some other feeling; else, why did he harp so persistently on 'the truculence of Poutsma,' 'the revolutionary nature of the movement,' etc. ?"

The *Cape Argus* observer unburdened himself thus: "As a work of art the address cannot be overpraised, but before judging of its value as a prosecuting speech, I should like to hear the counsel for the defence."

The Government papers were complimentary, but a similar note of reserve was at first perceptible. Long cables were sent to Europe, and some of the English newspapers waxed sarcastic. The Labour organs were not chary of disdain, but if our recollection in South Africa serves us rightly, the democracy of the United Kingdom was not quite so enthusiastic about the *Umgeni* passengers, or their cause either, when it made their personal acquaintance.

On the 5th of February the Minister continued his speech, quoting voluminously from the words of the strike leaders as reported in the daily Press, and showing exactly what the state of affairs was during the crisis from day to day, and almost from hour to hour. He blamed Mr. Creswell for his failure to disavow the lawless elements. But his severest displeasure was reserved for General Hertzog and Mr. H. E. S. Fremantle (who was then M.L.A. for Uitenhage), because while the country was threatened with general paralysis, they had held a Nationalist Congress at Bloemfontein, and had made "blatantly patriotic" speeches instead of discarding party feeling and supporting the Government. He defended the proclamation of martial law, mentioning the great danger to the white population that had been shown to exist at Jagersfontein, a small Free State town where the natives employed in the diamond mines had run amuck. Nor did he forget to remind his hearers of the peculiar and insidious risk attaching to dalliance with dynamitards. He praised the spontaneous manner in which the people as a whole had rallied round the Government. With legitimate pride in his own people and his own Act, he told the tale of the Wolmaransstad commando of a

thousand men which had met at a railway station within twenty-four hours of the call reaching their commandant; and this was in a large, thinly populated district. The shadow of the burghers, he said, was on Johannesburg, and that was what prevented a repetition of the scenes of 1913.[1] He distinctly denied that the Governor-General was to blame for anything at all; Ministers were entirely responsible. It was a purely internal question, and a South African Government had to decide. The final selection from among a much larger list of candidates for deportation had given the Government a great deal of anxious thought; as it was, he felt that many "deserving cases" remained in the country. He reminded Mr. Patrick Duncan of his own Peace Preservation Ordinance of the Milner days, which sanctioned deportation. By the irony of fate, that Ordinance was repealed in a Union enactment, which became operative on the 1st of August 1913. It had been insistently asked: Why were not the men brought to trial? But, he submitted, their crime was an entirely novel one. It was high treason to Society, but the existing laws on treason dealt with delinquencies of an exclusively military character; they dated back to the Middle Ages, and there was nothing left for executive authority but to take the law into its own hands on such an exceptional occasion. He then quoted a few recent cases of deportation in British Africa outside the Union. Ministers, he admitted, might have released the deportees on bail, and asked Parliament to impugn them by special legislation. But if that had happened, turmoil and anarchy would have continued. The risk was too serious a one to take. And, moreover, did any one really imagine that Parliament would have responded? No, the

[1] In spite of the fact that, at a South African party Congress held at Cape Town in November 1913, the split in the party had become definite, with a very large minority against General Botha, the Boer population turned out with great unanimity when the call to arms came. Even from the Free State, which considered itself slighted in the person of General Hertzog and was now entirely without representation in the Cabinet owing to Mr. Fischer's death, a satisfactory accession of military strength accrued.

deportation had to take place "before the fires had burnt down," while a state of revolution existed, or not at all. In a country such as ours, with millions of blacks in danger of catching the contagion from their white neighbours, any Government was enjoined to act with promptitude and decision in situations like these. Attempts to upset the existing order had to be met with the mailed fist. Government was conscious of its obligations in this respect, Government was confident of the support of the people's representatives.

He had spoken for another two hours. Usually, the Assembly sits from 2 to 6 p.m., and (when evening sittings have been resolved upon) from 8 to 11 p.m. But the leader of the Opposition moved the adjournment shortly after four o'clock, in view of the importance of the speech just delivered, and this was agreed to.

The sensational documentary evidence that was expected in defence of the deportation was not produced, because there was none. The Minister himself had never led any one to believe that it existed. The skill with which he dovetailed the facts, as generally known, into each other convinced many a waverer that the Government, in spite of the risk it admittedly ran with public opinion by placing itself technically in the wrong, had taken that risk in order to save the country from an appalling danger. "That is the point where the weak man fails," said Smuts when he came to the moment that was to settle South Africa's fate. But irresolution is not his weakness, and the *Cape Argus* admitted in a leading article that "the Minister made out a much stronger case all round than was generally expected." The same paper's gallery correspondent now wrote: ". . . The speech was a great effort, effortlessly made. For epigram, finish of phrase; for wit, whether in the form of sly humour or biting sarcasm; for the evidences throughout of a scholarly, cultured mind; but, above all, for the power of flinging facts into the right perspective—or, at any rate, for the blending of all these qualities, I have never heard a speech to excel it."

In fact, the whole of the South African Press was full of the speech, and most of the comment was favourable. Some of the Dutch organs that have since gone over to Nationalism, and have become Smuts' bitterest detractors, would do well to dust their files and republish some of the articles they then contained. The *Star* representative at Cape Town remarked: "Strong men are never popular in popular assemblies. . . . It is true that a number of deep-chested 'hoor-hoor's' rolled their encouragement across from the Backveld benches, but the Minister was not troubling much about these. He was talking to the Opposition seats, and seemed a little disconcerted when they sat impassive under his quiet confession of responsibility."

The *Manchester Guardian* of the 6th of February was of opinion that the cabled summaries of the speech did not carry conviction, and showed the Union Government to be out of sympathy with the legitimate claims of Labour. The *Scotsman* had nothing but warm praise, and so had the *Irish Independent*. Probably these two remembered the Stone Age manner in which South African Labour had previously, when the coast was clear, enforced its "legitimate demands" on passive or active strike-breakers and on totally innocent third parties. The London *Times* was sympathetic, but thought that the deportation might embarrass the Imperial authorities.[1]

The *African World* said that "all decent men on both sides would approve." And, if on this special occasion I may quote a German newspaper, *Sued Afrika* (Johannesburg)

[1] A year and nine months later, at a little railway station in the grey grain region of Lichtenburg, Smuts publicly stated that the Imperial Government had uttered the gravest objection. The incident was quoted by him then in order to prove to recalcitrant burghers that we enjoyed the completest self-government, and that when occasion demands we even allow ourselves the luxury of treading on very big toes. But General Hertzog, whose battle-cry to those same burghers is "South Africa first!" mournfully reproached the Minister of Defence during the Indemnity debate with the fact that, by dumping the *Umgeni* party on England's shores, Government might have placed *future* Imperial Ministers in an unpleasant predicament! Such are the amenities of South African party politics.

cried Bravo! Mac, the *Cape Times* cartoonist, showed Smuts as a gladiator, his foot on the prostrate body of Syndicalism, with the spectators holding their "thumbs down." The *Rand Daily Mail* of the 7th of February, however, persisted in claiming that Smuts had "failed in proving the final part of his case." A stinging cartoon, representing Botha and Smuts as upholding a Union Jack that consisted of war material, appeared in *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Santry drew Smuts in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* in the rôle of Cromwell uttering the famous words, "Take away that bauble." Only one organ supported General Hertzog at this time, the since defunct *Het Volk* of Pretoria (a paper that had nothing to do with the political organization that had borne the name). It spoke of Smutsian sophisms and subterfuges, predicted all manner of evil, and was exceptionally strong on the constitutional aspect of the case. Its constitutional editor went into rebellion, less than a year afterwards; but that is a detail. The article in question pointed out, in sober truth, that the first direct attack ever made by Smuts on Hertzog had come during the second reading speech. It promised the Minister that he would "rue his so-called courage. Slim Jannie, with all his pluck, will find out one of these days that the men whom he stigmatized as sheep-like but blatant patriots have a brand of courage different from his own, and possess sharper weapons than perhaps he bargains for." At the time, no one noticed this threat in an obscure little weekly, but the knowledge we have since obtained throws a lurid light on its meaning.

De Volkstem had an article in Afrikaans on the Indemnity speech. The conclusion reads: "After all that has been said, this historical exposition will stand, and we think stand for ever, as one of the most marvellous orations of which South Africa can boast."

We may let it go at that. Every one who knows Smuts realizes that its unusual length was owing to unexampled conditions. He had not closed the mouths of either blatant patriots or blatant international anarchists. "The Red

Flag" still lived in song at Johannesburg, where its melancholy words wrung heartrending sounds from unmusical assemblages; but the Red Flag in the cloth, with concomitant tendencies towards destruction and disorder, was safely deposited on the shelf, at any rate for some considerable time. And that, after all, is a fairly sound test to apply to any political speech.

XVII

THE *UMGENI* TO BOOYSENS

THE debate on the second reading of the Indemnity Bill lasted through the best part of February. Not once during the almost interminable discussions did the Minister in charge intervene. He made no "personal explanations" or other interruptions, so common in the Union Assembly. He only spoke when attempts were made to obtain adjournments of the debate at moments when he was not prepared to grant them; and then he set his face with the utmost resolution against any loss of time. Amendments to the motion for second reading were moved. Imprecations were hurled across the floor. Charges and counter-charges were freely made. The question was dissected, and looked at from every standpoint. A veritable tempest raged at times. Smuts was in the House almost throughout, yet it was but seldom that a reflection of the angry words and gestures of the speakers appeared on his face. The monotony of it all, after the debate had dragged on a certain length, clearly bored him.

By the Labour party not a semblance of credit was given the Government for as much as a good intention. Of the little group, one or two members made speeches that were worth listening to. Mr. Creswell spoilt a notable contribution by over-elaboration and by the spiteful, ultra-vitriolic tone that often mars the effectiveness of his philippics. Of the Unionists, many declared that they did not like the Bill, but would vote for it as they had no option.

Mr. Patrick Duncan, one of the most respected and level-headed among them, turned against the majority of his party (of which he is now the Transvaal chairman). There should have been two Bills, he said, one for indemnity, and the other in regard to the deportation. The latter he could not support. Mr. Merriman, as often happens, banged the heads of all parties together, testified to his love for strictly constitutional methods, and in the end voted with the Government.

Smuts was accused of vindictiveness. It was alleged that he had metaphorically danced on the bodies of the vanquished. His words about the "fires burning down" and about the "honoured list" were cited as showing that, far from being imbued with the proper spirit, he was vengeful and flippant. Labour members did their best to prove that the conspiracy, of which he had made so much, was non-existent. The Government, they said, had committed all the illegal acts, and had conspired in order to exterminate by improper methods the perfectly legitimate Labour movement. How far these arguments impressed the House was shown by the division.

It may not be easy of belief, but at midnight on the 23rd of February a whole-hearted Government supporter rose to continue the debate, which had lasted for well-nigh three weeks. If the pages of *Hansard* are searched for fresh argument, which alone could have justified the continued strain on an already overtaxed Minister, they will fail to supply the material sought for. A friend of General Hertzog's (who had himself spoken at great length against the Government) carried on the discussion, and in the small hours a Labour member, after delivering a long, long speech, moved the adjournment of the debate. This was refused; at 5.40 a.m. on the 24th of February General Smuts was able to commence his reply. It lasted about half an hour. He began by referring to an important side-issue. Mr. Creswell had insinuated that the Minister had wired to Pretoria, ordering the destruction of important evidence. It so happened that Smuts had really sent a

telegram in almost the identical terms quoted by the hon. member. This instruction, however, concerned, he said, not the strike, but certain War Office matters of a confidential nature. He now asked Mr. Creswell to give the name of "the spy or the thief," and if this information were withheld, he would "not hesitate to employ all the machinery of Parliament" in order to obtain it.

Mr. Creswell refused.

The two men glared at each other. And there the matter rested, but only for the moment, for Smuts is not the man to resort to an empty threat.

His use of the word "conspiracy," he continued, had been challenged, but the matter was too serious to allow of quibbling about *words*. The facts were clear. On the other hand, not a particle of proof was available to buttress up the allegation that Government had abused its strength for the purpose of killing the trades unions. He did not think the House would take the responsibility of annulling the deportation, because, if the men came back and a fresh crisis resulted, would the burghers once more rise to the occasion? They all venerated the principles of liberty and justice, but the highest constitutional ideals were, in the ultimate analysis, derived from power; if his hearers wished this young country to go ahead under conditions of real liberty, they would have to lay the foundation on force as the only possible means of averting jeopardy to those ideals.

These were his last words. The House divided—twice, because the Labour party was consistently obstructing. The second reading was carried by 95 votes to 11. The five men who stood back to back with the Labour party were all Unionists, with the exception of Mr. Charles Fichardt, member for Ladybrand, who has since become much more notorious. General Hertzog was presumably busy elsewhere. He did not vote.

Many men of his own race have since condemned the severity with which Jan Smuts handled his syndicalist opponents. One of the Nationalist stump-orators invented

the name of *platskiet-politiek* (policy of shooting down ruthlessly) for the radical manner in which the Government consecutively put down violence, whether committed by Indian coolies, Johannesburg hooligans, or untamed men of the veld. It deserves notice, therefore, that a long and flowery eulogy of Jan Smuts the Strong appeared early in 1914 from the hand of Mr. C. J. Langenhoven, who is at present a Nationalist member of the Cape Provincial Council. It was on the score of the Minister's determined dead-set against disruptive forces that Mr. Langenhoven sang his praises—then!

Meanwhile the Session went on. The Bill was picked to pieces in Committee, and some amendments were carried. In the main, however, General Smuts strenuously opposed alterations. Step for step, word for word, comma for comma almost, the grim Labour sextet fought him. If the Speaker had had all his work cut out in confining the second reading debate within reasonable limits, suppressing wearisome repetition, causing members to withdraw objectionable verbiage, and ruling out of order frivolous amendments, the Chairman of Committees had a much harder task. Divisions galore were challenged. An unheard-of number of irrelevant speeches were made. Advantage was taken of every trick of procedure to delay the passage of the Bill. Theoretical wisdom was ventilated on a question that was admittedly one of practical interest. The adjournment was moved when the Minister persisted in continuing the proceedings. He was obliged to speak much more frequently than he relished, and he used every means to exhaust members' physical energy. But in vain; the six Labour men exhibited a bodily vigour, a mental alertness, that one could not but admire. Often they failed to draw the Minister whom they remorselessly assailed; many a time they succeeded. Sometimes the Chairman had them ejected through the front door. In they would come, returning via the back. There were violent scenes and accusations of partisanship against the majesty of the Chair. Apologies were demanded; some-

times they were given, at other times they were not forthcoming. Never in the history of South Africa have such riotous sittings detracted from the dignity of an Assembly, though some of the debates in the old Cape House ran the Indemnity discussion very close.

All-night sittings, fortunately for the country's welfare, are rare with us, but they were resorted to again, before the Bill was finally passed. No one, to be candid, had reason to be inordinately proud of the episode; the Minister could at any rate claim that, once the position under martial law had arisen, he was bound to obtain indemnity at the earliest possible moment, and that in the face of the most deliberate and unflinching obstruction, he had no option but to stretch forth his mighty arm to its full length. It should perhaps be added that, in spite of flamboyant protests by Mr. Creswell, the committee of inquiry, concerning the mysterious telegram was duly appointed. Creswell pluckily stood his ground, but Smuts was too clever for the Labour leader. The villain of the little interlude (a Defence Official), fearing unpleasant consequences to others, was candid enough to confess that he had been guilty of divulging his department's secret.

Thus ended, as far as direct Parliamentary action was concerned, the great *Umgeni* controversy. It would be idle to deny, however, that the whole of the remainder of the Session (which lasted well into July) was impregnated with the flavour of deportation. Numerous questions were asked on cognate subjects, motions were made and points threshed out on the Estimates. In addition to all this, Bills relating to the dispersal of riotous assemblies were discussed, and ameliorating legislation, bearing on Labour conditions, was passed. It proved a trying Session for the Minister of Defence, who was at the same time Minister of Finance and acting Minister of the Interior.

Many politicians felt that the Hertzog defection could not be said to have been adequately dealt with until such time as the electors should have received an opportunity

of expressing their opinions. Mr. Hull had manfully resigned his seat at Carolina–Barberton, and had been re-elected unopposed because the South African party, of which he was still a member, decided to nominate him afresh. The Labour agitation, it was considered, should be brought to a head in one way or another by an appeal to the electorate. The Government was weary, as well it might be, and would have welcomed a change, short of plunging the country into anarchy. To be brief, a general election was thought by many to be imminent, once the Indemnity Bill had passed its third reading in the Senate and Supply had been voted. The party managers on the Government side were weighing the matter in their own minds and sending out antennæ in likely directions, when a flashlight fell on the situation in the Transvaal, causing a precipitate withdrawal of any intentions there may have been. At the Provincial Council elections, both the Rand and Pretoria plumped almost solidly for Labour. Some well-known men of substance and standing, with the most favourable public records, were ingloriously defeated by political nobodies. The Province, as such, had nothing on earth to do with deportation, but Socialism obtained a majority in the Transvaal Council, and a veritable landslide took place. Many careful observers knew what the feeling in the towns was, but not even the Labour leaders could have predicted such sweeping majorities, obtained because the deportation had offended the constituencies' "sense of justice."[1]

And so Government found itself impelled to carry on. The cartoonists had the laugh of Smuts and of the Unionist party, which was the loser in the Provincial elections. Caricatures appeared, grossly exaggerating the significance of an event that gave ample food for thought even without

[1] Pretoria is usually more balanced. The Rand has always been subject to sudden and uncontrollable fits of temper. The same community that could not bear deportation without trial in 1914, burnt and looted, without benefit of an order of Court, dozens of premises in the same town of Johannesburg a year later.

exaggeration. The draughtsmen also overdid Smuts' dejection, but there can be no doubt that he was fatigued, and there was a plaintive note in his voice when, in reply to the Budget debate in May 1914, he pleaded for a limitation of the length of speeches, which was becoming in many instances inordinate. He also complained of insincerity in some of them. Economy, he said, was the general cry, but "often the members who are clamouring most strongly for economy come to my office asking me to do something that would mean the spending of large amounts, so long as it is in their own constituencies."

He defended his dual position, against which many voices had been raised, some on his own side. It was really to the country's advantage, he explained, that he held the portfolio of Finance, because the military knowledge he was constantly acquiring assisted him in checking the expenditure of the Defence Department when he was seated in the Treasurer's chair. The House laughed, but it is to be feared that few members were convinced by the ingenious plea. It may as well be stated that, although Jan Smuts is essentially a man who can say "No"—in the first place to himself in his personal capacity—he has probably exercised that gift very seldom to that part of himself which is Minister of Defence. All his warnings as to the necessity for South Africa to prepare herself for contingencies point the one way. He felt that an early organization of our military resources was required, and in view of the importance of the subject he was not the man to deny himself the funds. It would be difficult to contend that, in view of all that has happened, he did not render South Africa service in acting as he did. As a matter of fact, it was found in actual practice that our armaments were even now not adequate; the auxiliary services, too, swallowed a vast amount of expenditure when the test of warfare came to be applied to them. But that the equipment was incomplete was not owing to any negligence on the Minister's part; it occurred rather in spite of him. In any country it is difficult to obtain Supply

for heavy ordnance and light brigades; local conditions made it particularly so in South Africa.

Apart from all this, there was some truth in the allegation that General Smuts was not an ideal Treasurer. On the income side, he was continually weighed down by the consciousness that his financial position was a temporary one. This, of course, rendered him disinclined to adopt vigorous innovations and to reform our admittedly unscientific system of taxation. The peculiar fetters of circumstance that had hampered the footsteps of the Government almost from the establishment of Union constituted a further inducement to walk warily along this road. As to expenditure, financial genius is quite distinct from any other form of ability. We have millionaires who would probably find the simplest algebraic problem beyond their comprehension (*bôkant hul vuurmaakplek*, as the typical Afrikaans expression has it). Also, eminence in the industrial and commercial sphere has frequently proved to be far from a guarantee as to capacity for political leadership. It is therefore no reflection on General Smuts to say that he has not shown any special aptness for finance. Cheeseparing lies below and beyond his administrative horizon. Even if his inclination had been other than it is, he lacked the time that would undoubtedly have been well spent on his additional portfolio.

On the other hand, his financial administration has by no means been so extravagant as the Unionists have constantly made it out to be, and certainly not so "disastrous" as the Nationalists like to maintain. He has resisted many attempts by the Socialist minority to spend money like water on altruistic experiments, and any Minister in his place would have had to meet severe demands on the country's resources. It would be ungenerous to leave his Treasurership without mentioning that on the purely technical side he showed absolute mastery of figures. Whatever the cause, it is an established fact that most cultured men, unless they are trained in bookkeeping and arithmetic, find a magic difficulty in handling large sums

and in understanding the simplest accounting transactions. The average person is not quick at grasping that three millions added to five millions make eight millions, although a plain 3+5 proposition may be well within the compass of his instantaneous mental processes. General Smuts does not suffer from the common disability in this respect. His Budget speeches were always models of clearness, and of praiseworthy brevity. Mr. Hull, who was a highly efficient Treasurer, perhaps made them more interesting, but certainly at the expense of time. He was famous for his involutions and convolutions; not satisfied with stating that £5,000,000 plus £3,000,000 made £8,000,000, he would a moment later tell you that if you subtracted the £3,000,000 he had mentioned from the total of £8,000,000, you would get the original £5,000,000; and before he came to the end of his speech he would have reminded you that if £5,000,000 were deducted from the £8,000,000, you could get no other result than to leave the £3,000,000 aforesaid. All of which was no doubt meant to make his statements clear to the meanest intelligence, but in reality the presentation of one and the same simple mathematical fact in metamorphic variety would have the effect of fogging the hearer's mind. Mr. Hull was prolix; the objection to General Smuts' financial statements was usually that they were too brief, although they always proved on analysis to contain the requisite information. He was never unduly dogmatic. In 1914, it was held by several speakers that he would not get his revenue. In the course of his reply, he said: "There is a great deal to be said for the view that my estimates may not be realized. There have been very strong arguments on both sides (laughter). But, on the whole, I think that probably I am correct (renewed laughter)."

It was a momentous Session in more ways than one. Yielding to a certain amount of pressure in connection with the income tax, and also in pursuance of his own forward land policy, General Smuts had the courage to propose a land tax, always a delicate matter in this country

of big landowners. There were intricate discussions as to the principle on which it was to be based, but the reader will not demand dissertations on "unimproved land values" or similar enigmatic quantities. Sober truth compels one to state that, owing to dissatisfaction with the scheme at both poles of political thought, it did not reach fruition; when the Prorogation came, the second reading of the Bill imposing the tax had still to be moved.

On the 11th of June 1914 the Government was beaten in a straight fight on a taxation measure. The Minister of Finance wished to exempt the Premier Diamond Company from the incidence of the income tax on the ground that the Premier paid over a large percentage of its earnings to the State, and that the agreement under which this took place made further levies tantamount to a breach of faith on the part of the Government. Mr. Jagger moved an amendment to delete the exemption. After an acrimonious debate, this was carried by fifty votes to forty-three. The Opposition were reinforced by Labour, by the Nationalists (except General Hertzog, who did not vote, probably because he was once more otherwise engaged), and by the Merriman group of the South African party, one of whose members had also outmanœuvred the proposed land tax.

General Smuts does not often lose his equanimity in Parliament. I have seen him looking as fresh as paint, and as unconcerned as a schoolboy, at a time when grave difficulties beset the Cabinet. On this occasion, however, he was visibly annoyed; the loud applause with which the result of the division was received had hardly died down when he moved to report progress. This was carried, and the House at once adjourned. In spite of the impression evidently made by the incident on General Smuts, it hardly struck any one present that Ministers would take the matter very seriously, because after all only a question of detail was involved. It seems, however, that a more or less formal Cabinet council was held without delay. Perhaps the serious lack of party discipline dis-

played by the seceding Merrimanites had angered the Government. Maybe there were other forces at work; it had certainly proved a little difficult of late to keep a compact majority together, and the combination effected over the Premier tax was such a complex one that it might well have made any Government pause. However that may be, it became known in political circles that same evening that we were in the throes of a crisis, and that resignation might come at once. General Botha stated in the House on the following day that only a sense of duty to the country had induced Ministers to retain their posts, because a large number of uncompleted Bills would have come to naught if the Cabinet had refused to carry on. The leader of the Opposition contributed a gibe, and counselled immediate dissolution after the Prorogation. Mr. Creswell made the usual "scene," and then the matter dropped.

The decision to remain in office led to increasing activity among the cartoonists, some of whom had already found a source of prolific inspiration in what they called the baiting of Labour by Smuts, and in his land tax difficulties. As far as the Labour party was concerned, his hand was heavy on them during the greater part of the Session, but they were amply revenged by the success of their tenacious fighting methods in delaying the business of the House, which was almost their sole object. Time after time they insisted on obtaining information and explanations that General Smuts was unwilling to give. On such occasions he would either consult the papers on his desk as if he did not even hear hon. members, or he would return their looks of fiery challenge. But when he will not speak, it is extremely difficult to make him do so. Frequently his unbending disposition has led to the slow passage of Bills through Committee. Many a time a less talented colleague has been more successful in this regard. It has fallen to Smuts' lot, perhaps more often than he cared, to drive measures through by main force, sitting late night after night. This is not always a wise

policy, and its drawbacks were sometimes apparent, but it has happened that there was practically no choice. In vanquishing obstruction by fatigue he has had to recognize that even his iron constitution would not always stand the strain. Those of us who realize the importance of such a man being kept in fighting trim have more than once noticed black rings under his eyes, deep lines in his face, and a general appearance of weariness testifying to the strain.

As a rule General Smuts supplies a thorough exposition of Bills and motions standing in his name. The quotations in previous chapters testify to that. Yet it cannot be denied that fatigue, both in its primary stage and as manifested through ill-humour, have on rare occasions tempted him to deal with fairly important subjects too cursorily and inconclusively. According to his mood, he will be found prepared to accept amendments to Bills (always so long as no great principle is involved) or determined to resist to the last even the smallest alterations. His great legal knowledge and rapidity of thought enable him to test the value of emendations at once. Well-meaning but inexperienced parliamentarians have not seldom been beholden to him for pointing out that the changes of phraseology they wished to introduce would entirely fail to attain their object; sometimes he has shown them that the very opposite of their intentions would be the result of their misplaced zeal. When he makes a weighty speech on introducing a Bill, he is usually rewarded by ample support, but when his prolegomena is to the effect that hon. members are confronted with but "a little Bill," they usually wonder what is behind it! When he wishes to make sure that a point shall be thoroughly understood, he is never tempted by his love of brevity to abstain from lawyerlike reiteration.

His physical movements in Parliament are remarkably slow, and in strong contrast to the energetic gait that is his in private life. He is wont to show no haste on entering the House—before prayers, when his time allows; he will cross

the floor without any greater speed if he desires a chat with some Opposition member ; almost stealthily he visits members of his own party at intervals ; many a time he will softly step out of his seat to consult statutes at the Table or hold whispered conversation with the Clerk regarding procedure. You will seldom catch him lolling in his seat. There are always official papers to be gone through, whips to be instructed, colleagues to be coached. When you see him growing red in the face, you know that he is "really-truly" excited. To think out a problem that suddenly presents itself, he likes to take a lonely stroll in the Lobby ; there, too, he will be found pacing the floor with slow, but irregular step, his head bent slightly forward to remind you of the old Johannesburg days. Refreshments hardly ever tempt him during the sittings. Coffee is the popular Dutch drink in South Africa, and tea is the liquid idol of the British Afrikander, with whisky as a solvent of many difficulties on both sides. But it must be a very long sitting that tempts Smuts away from his seat next to the Premier ; for days on end it has been his duty to keep the flag flying while most or all of his fellow-Ministers could disport themselves outside.

In the Senate, General Smuts has very taking ways. The grave and reverend seigniors of the Upper House have gone to the length of alleging that he wishes to take their privileges away! Constitutional crises between the two Houses occur with humorous regularity and varying intensity, but always the Minister of Defence makes soothing speeches to our Ancients, assuring them that he wants to treat them with nothing but the highest respect and veneration. And yet there is a suspicion in many people's minds that a single-Chamber Parliament would suit Oom Jannie marvellously well!

His offices at Cape Town are literally within a stone's-throw of the sacred edifice where he is obliged to spend so many laborious hours. His mornings are always fully occupied, nor does he attempt to escape from the heavy atmosphere of politics by looking for his lunch elsewhere

than in the dining-room of Parliament. Many of our statesmen, *in posse* and *in esse*, shun conversation on other than political or kindred subjects; and so General Smuts almost invariably gets politics for *hors d'œuvres* as well as for dessert, however capable he himself is of discussing matters of wider interest. I remember a luncheon party during the 1914 Session at which he showed that he could appreciate a joke against himself. Several of us were the guests of Mr. H. Mentz, M.L.A., then Government Whip, who has since become Minister of Lands. The Deportation debate, coupled with previous happenings, had made it almost a commonplace among the small-talk of our political humorists to bracket Smuts with autocracy. It was my turn to tell a story, and it happened to be one of a very pompous gentleman whom I had had to put in his place with the doctrine that this was a democratic country. I added that this was, of course, said "with all due deference to General Smuts." The victim of the joke, with a smile, rose half out of his seat, politely bowing his acknowledgments!

Mr. D. M. Brown, M.L.A. for Three Rivers, whose pawky Scottish wit makes him the licensed entertainer of the House, knew a much better story. He told us that, at the Grahamstown Centenary celebrations, there was great curiosity among the Saints, especially the female ones, to see and hear General Smuts. When he arrived on the platform, one lady asked another: "Would that be Jannie, now?" "No," was the answer, "I've always heard that Jannie is good-looking." At which General Smuts blushed, torn between conflicting emotions, but well able to thank Nature for entitling him to believe repute rather than the lady. Mr. Brown continued: "After General Smuts had spoken for some time, the first lady said, 'It must be Jannie!' But her companion was not to be shaken, and retorted: 'I'm sure it isn't, because Jannie is known for his good English.'" We all laughed, and General Smuts joined in.

On the 7th of July the House rose; within a few weeks

war was declared. It is unnecessary to point out that South Africa's centre of gravity would have shifted at once to General Smuts' office, if it had not already been there for some time, owing to the disturbed state of the country. Although his Defence Act was but two years old, the Cabinet was able to make its well-known offer to the Imperial Government: the Imperial troops could be withdrawn, for the Union would attend to its own safety. This was followed by the negotiations leading up to the campaign in German South-West Africa. A military camp was established at Booysens, near Johannesburg, and there General Smuts addressed the Active Citizen Force on the 4th of September. "There are many people in this country," he declared, "who do not appreciate the tremendous gravity of the crisis in which South Africa, together with the whole of the British Empire, is placed to-day. Although apparently we stand outside and at some distance from the actual scene of conflict, yet at any moment we may be drawn into the vortex." He spoke of South Africa's military traditions, and trusted that, if necessary, fresh laurels would be added to the ancient glory. It was clear from his speech that there was work in store for the men, and that he had fully grasped the world-wide nature of the struggle that had just begun.

XVIII

BOOYSENS TO NOOITGEDACHT

A FEW days after the Booysens speech, the Minister of Defence addressed Parliament, which had met in Special Session in order to consider the war situation. The South-West campaign had virtually begun. Outside of South Africa it was no doubt considered a matter of course that the Union ranged itself under the Empire's banner and actively assisted in the war. With us it did not appear self-evident at all. The Labour party was half-hearted, to say the least of it, during those first months. The Nationalists asseverated that this was England's war and that South Africa had nothing to do with it. They had not yet gone so far as they are going nowadays, when they call the relationship between the other parts of the Empire and ourselves merely a "personal union," centring exclusively in the King. In practice, however, their attitude amounted to this as early as 1914. When the difficulties of General Smuts and his colleagues are considered, it should not be forgotten that the Nationalists were the people who had until lately been of his own party. Economically and sentimentally the traces of the Boer War had not yet been obliterated. Provincialism had prevented the full growth of a Union organism; while to many a mind the native and coloured inhabitants of South Africa provided another argument for a policy of *festina lente*. Pacifism was bound to appeal with peculiar force to a great proportion of our citizens, who had become acquainted at first hand with the drawbacks and the horrors of war. A

powerful pro-German propaganda was being carried on, at first in subterranean channels, but afterwards more openly. And, lastly, to say that our military machine was still incomplete is no disparagement, in view of the experience of much older countries.

It has been alleged that Smuts was only too eager to participate in the war, because he wanted more territory. We know, however, that the original offer to the Imperial Government was of a purely defensive nature. Moreover, if he had contemplated aggressive action in the years gone by, it is not likely that he would have acquiesced in the appointment of Maritz by Beyers, for he knew Maritz and opposed the step when it was taken. It became clear at an early date that the Germans in South-West Africa were intriguing. This was a very natural thing for them to do—as natural as the Union Government's determination to end these intrigues. In view of the presence of the wireless station at Windhoek and the possibility of German cruisers harassing our trade, the interests of the Union demanded sharp and immediate action. There are opponents of Smuts who, while granting these premises as far as the exterior situation was concerned, maintain that he should have weighed against them the objections to a warlike policy that were even then causing a ferment in the ex-Republics.

If the Government of which he was such a prominent member had been the spineless, opportunist body these critics represent it to be, it would no doubt have followed the line of least resistance by adopting the maximum of inaction. But Smuts considered it his duty to assert himself; his colleagues supported him, and they were covered by Parliamentary sanction.[1]

[1] General Botha has since stated officially that, had Parliament given an adverse vote, the Cabinet would have resigned. The same result would, one may assume, have ensued if the South African party had omitted to support Ministers. It is no longer a secret that, in the caucus held at the eleventh hour, several members required convincing. If Ministers had not taken the meeting into their confidence—and there is always the temptation for a strong man to take the bit into his own mouth in war-time—there probably would have been an unedifying debate in the House.

In the course of his speech to the Assembly, Smuts reminded his hearers of France's generous treatment of Kruger, and of the Kaiser's rude repulse during the Boer War. This reminder was given because the Nationalists had spoken of the ties of blood between the Germans and the South African Dutch, making it appear as if the only great European country to which the Dutch owed thanks was Germany. Hertzog, he said, acted like a "German advocate." South Africa wanted to develop as a free community, and was threatened by a military autocracy in the worst form. He drew attention to the aggressive German action in Europe as well as in South Africa. It had been said that South Africa was not armed. He advised the Germans not to rely too much on that. It was true that he had not distributed so many rifles and rounds of ammunition among the border districts of the Cape and the Free State as the farmers there had clamoured for. One never knew what might happen, and Government was keeping a tight grip on armaments, but when the time came it would have them handy.[1]

Almost the last words of his speech contained a warning against the adoption of a wrong attitude towards German citizens of the Union. Subsequent events showed that he did not speak in this strain without good reason, for many South Africans, carried away by an excess of zeal and by the passion of war, have been agitating continuously in order to get naturalization certificates treated as "scraps of paper." At a later stage, the Minister once more dealt with the

A majority the Government would have obtained, but it could not have been so overwhelming; the number of votes against General Botha's war resolution was so small that Ministers were fully justified in acting in accordance with the result of the division, in spite of the fact that the constitution of the House was known not to correspond entirely with the feeling of the country.

[1] There had indeed been many requests, both in Parliament and by correspondence. Many unsuspecting men thought at the time that General Smuts was mistaken in not supplying the outlying districts with arms, in view of possible danger from the natives. The rebellion, which was hatched and found its principal support along the borders of Basutoland and of German South-West Africa, showed, however, that his refusal was dictated by his usual far-sightedness.

question of the Germans within our borders, doing his best to assuage the fears of people who saw a spy in every one whose name, appearance, or accent suggested Teutonic origin, however remote. "I myself," he assured the House amidst laughter, "am often taken for a German."

The Special Session did not last long, but the Minister of Defence had to answer several questions about rest camps, pay for volunteers, and similar matters. Presumably, hon. members who allowed their enthusiasm to become the means of absorbing his attention were not aware of the anxieties that were troubling him. In August rebellious convulsions had shaken the Western Transvaal; it was only due to the personal influence of Generals Botha and Smuts over General De la Rey that the latter—swinging like a pendulum between his duty and the superstitious value he attached to the prophecies of Van Rensburg—straightened matters out in Lichtenburg.

In the middle of the month of September General Beyers resigned. He had, as he himself admitted, expected Parliament to vote for peace; when he saw that he did not get his own way, he laid down his office. His letter of resignation was a tactless one—not a soldier's, but a politician's. It was long and rambling. Smuts' answer, too, was not so short as his answers generally are. On the 19th of September he wrote, *inter alia*: "For the Dutch-speaking section in particular I cannot conceive anything more fatal and humiliating than a policy of lip-loyalty in fair weather and a policy of neutrality and pro-German sentiment in days of storm and stress. It may be that our peculiar internal circumstances and our backward condition after the great war will place a limit on what we can do, but nevertheless I am convinced that the people will support the Government in carrying out the mandate of Parliament in this manner, which is the only legitimate one, to fulfil their duty to South Africa and to the Empire, and maintain their dearly won honour unblemished for the future."

He also reminded Beyers that the free Constitution granted us enabled an officer "to write with impunity a letter for

which you would be liable in the German Empire to the extreme penalty."

The last paragraph of all is typical: "Your resignation is hereby accepted." Then came the signature. But more followed. Smuts seldom hesitates in enforcing on others the full consequences of his policy. Where he differs from many prototypes is that he always enforces them on himself as well. Beyers had resigned; he himself assumed the duties of Commandant-General. From now onwards he was to be found most of the time glued to his desk at Headquarters, discharging the two military functions, not to speak of his other ones. He worked with a close and unremitting zeal that is unfortunately rare in South Africa. For months he lived in town, visiting his home at Irene but very occasionally. In the work of planning, organization, and constant attention to detail he might not have succeeded if he had not possessed first of all the invaluable help of General Botha, and in the second place two devoted personal assistants. One is Mr. H. R. M. Bourne, the permanent head of the Defence Department; the other is Mr. Ernest F. C. Lane, who became Smuts' private secretary (after he had made a few unsuccessful attempts to fill the post by obtaining a young Afrikander who suited his ways) in the earlier days of the Transvaal Government. Both are Englishmen. Both are hard, earnest workers. Both have learnt sufficient Dutch to enable them to carry out their duties.[1]

Immediately after General Beyers' resignation, the ill-fated motor ride in which General De la Rey was killed took place. There are politicians who have either clearly implied or stated openly their belief that the Johannesburg policeman's shot through which the aged Senator met his death was not an

[1] General Smuts has often had to defend himself against the accusation that Dutch was an unknown quantity at Headquarters. In reply, it has been a standing joke with him to tell his audiences that visitors reproached him with having "a Hollander secretary." This, of course, by way of compliment to Mr. Lane's Dutch. Mr. Lane became a captain in the German South-West Africa campaign, and left us about a year ago in order to join the Heavy Artillery in Europe. Mr. Bourne is still in charge at Headquarters.

accidental one. To all reasonable men the judicial inquiry that was held soon afterwards carried a contrary conviction. A knowledge of human nature would be sufficient to make one understand that, after the murderous exploits of the Foster robber band, which had terrified the Rand and cost a member of the police force his life, the constable's action was perfectly explicable. But even to him who knew nothing of these facts it would appear as incredible as anything could well be, if he only realized Smuts' staunchness as a friend, that the Minister had played the butcher to De la Rey. These two had been for years connected by personal friendship. "Oom Koos" was one of the Progressive Volksraad members who had favoured Smuts' schemes of reform in the Republic. During the Boer War a warm attachment sprang up between them; after peace was declared they became as brothers are supposed to be, but, alas! seldom are. Until the very last, Oom Jannie did his best to shield the memory of Oom Koos. And indeed there are few tangible facts to connect De la Rey with the rebellion, which came more than a month after his death, except the *ex post facto* statements made by rebels and rebel sympathizers themselves. De la Rey seems to have been of two minds until the hour of his death, although there can be little doubt that his expected presence at the Potchefstroom camp was not likely to be productive of much good.

Events that are near are apt to disturb a due sense of perspective. This tendency is all the greater when they are connected with an upheaval such as the present war, particularly when its significance is intensified by rebellion. It will be necessary in this case to resist the desire to set down minutely the happenings of the past two years, intimately connected as they are with General Smuts' life and character. In general outline they are well known; books have been published dealing with the rising as well as with the South-West campaign. More books are sure to come in view of the fighting in East Africa. No attempt will therefore be made to give a complete account in these pages of either the causes of the rebellion or of its military aspects.

Early in October, Maritz threw aside further pretence and openly defied his superiors. General Smuts had expected this, and to a certain extent forestalled Maritz's movements, causing him by a series of orders to declare his real intentions. The public were placed in possession of the facts within a couple of days. Martial law was proclaimed, and General Coen Brits soon had a successful encounter with Maritz, whose German military connections were established beyond the possibility of doubt. These events naturally influenced the unrest and disaffection to a considerable extent. The cauldron had been simmering; now it threatened to boil over. The Swellendam Presbytery of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape Province, in Session assembled at Caledon, decided to issue a warning. It also requested President Steyn and General Hertzog to repudiate Maritz's treachery.

President Steyn's answer was brief, and to the effect that he was doing what he could. The final sentence of his telegram ran: "The Church should not forget that the Lord reigneth."

General Hertzog replied with some heat that his warnings and counsel had been made light of; that he had done his duty and could do no more; that peace could only be expected from the Government, and that he had offered the latter his services "in connection with other efforts made in order to avoid *civil war*."[1]

When Smuts saw that moral suasion was not going to open any oysters, he sent reinforcements to Brits, knowing the hardness of Maritz's shell. It had been announced that the South-West campaign would be fought with volunteers. As soon as Maritz rebelled, Government decided that it was

[1] Since many attempts have been made, both in South Africa and elsewhere, to saddle the Government, particularly General Smuts, with the responsibility for the bloodshed, this expression on General Hertzog's part is interesting. President Steyn also used the words "civil war" in his subsequent correspondence with the Government. General Botha employed them in a speech he made at Pretoria just prior to his taking the field. The terms "armed protest" and "armed demonstration" are of later invention.

necessary to call out the Defence Force, and this became the ostensible reason for rebel commandoes taking the field. Beyers, who was still in Pretoria early in October, was asked by Smuts to assert his influence over Maritz, but although it was he who had appointed the traitor, he refused to go.

This decision was not taken at once; Beyers thought the matter over. He played the Hamlet in the rebellion tragedy.[1] It was a part for which he was well cast. He was in many respects a fine man, and those who knew him could not but regret that he found such an ignominious end in the waters of the Vaal River. He was not himself during the last weeks of his stay at Pretoria. In the Boer War he had been an intrepid leader. Now he allowed his actions to be affected by anonymous threatening letters: the soldier in him had been swamped by the politician, and there is reason to believe that his religious instincts as well as those of De la Rey had become perverted into superstitious belief in "prophecy." There is no telling what he would have done in the end if a deplorable series of insults had not been levelled at him when he took part in the celebration at the capital of the late President Kruger's birthday. It was injudicious on the organizers' part to have asked him to speak there, and they made other mistakes. The police did their best, but a clique of verdant "patriotic" Pretorians—who would have been far better employed cooling their martial ardour in Flanders—committed reprehensible acts of violence which further excited Beyers. This happened almost simultaneously with Maritz's defection.

Our Department of Defence sometimes swallows huge camels while straining at poor little gnats, after the manner of military men the world over. It prohibited the publication of newspapers containing reports of the celebration. This led to garbled, highly coloured versions being circulated, and tended to give the affair a much worse complexion than it deserved, but it was bad enough. Of course, a man of stronger character would not have allowed himself to be

[1] De Wet resembles Laertes. It might appear invidious were one to indicate the identity of Polonius and Claudius.

influenced by the antics of a crowd of ragamuffins, but Beyers added extreme sensitiveness to his other defects as a public man, and the incident excited him abnormally.

It will be unnecessary to recapitulate what happened in the Free State; the meetings at Kopjes with Transvaal representatives; the dispatch of deputations to Pretoria, calling on the Government to stultify itself by disregarding the mandate of Parliament and practically endorsing, if only in a passive manner, the actions of Maritz; the meetings of commandants and others, pledging support to the Government in the suppression of treason, and so forth. A little more than two weeks after Maritz leapt into the fray on behalf of Berlin, General C. R. De Wet, an ex-Minister of the Orange River Colony and an ex-member of the Union Council of Defence, set the veld afire. From his home at Memel (on the Free State side of the Drakensberg escarpment, close to the Natal railway station of Ingagane), he started with a small mounted band, which soon reached Vrede. This little town is situated not far from Standerton, with which it is connected by rail. The Government had a strong force at Standerton, and had Smuts wished it, he could have scattered, if not caught, De Wet's commando there and then; but the Cabinet, far from being eager to crush a political opponent, as has since been alleged by rebel sympathizers, held its hand.

Negotiations were in progress. President Steyn, whose singular devotion to duty during the Boer War had led to his being stricken by a severe malady, sent his son to Pretoria. It was Dr. C. Steyn who, accompanied part of the time by General Hertzog, made strenuous efforts to get both Beyers—encamped in the Western Transvaal—and De Wet to arrive at an amicable settlement of their differences with authority. When it became clear that there was no hope, both the Government troops and the rebel commandoes had increased in numbers, and a serious collision was unavoidable.

On the 7th of November General Smuts spoke at a motor brigade review, held in Johannesburg. He drew attention

to the importance of mobility in modern warfare ; justified the South-West campaign ; severely criticized the rebel leaders ; paid due respect to De Wet's record, but refused to condone the attempt to haul down the new flag. "The Dutch people of South Africa," he said, referring particularly to Maritz, "feel that their honour is touched. They are determined to do their duty and wipe out this disgrace. . . . Out of the late great war, the Boer people brought little except their good name. That is what they value as their greatest asset in the world. They are not going to allow any one, no matter how great a part he has played in the past, to drag that good name in the mire. We are going to see this thing through."

He apologized for the meagreness of the information supplied by Government, and promised that the rebels would not be given rest day or night. Superior forces were in touch with them, and the people could "sleep peacefully."

This explanation was certainly not uncalled for, because the paucity of news was disturbing the peace of mind of the public. Government allowed no one to gather any military intelligence, and gave very little itself. This encouraged the rumour-mongering which, of all South African industries, is the most popular and the most permanent. No one outside the charmed circle really knew what the rebellion was about, what flag the insurgents had adopted, if any, and how far the movement had spread. Now this town, then that, was supposed to be in their possession, while Government maintained a sphinx-like silence. Most of us felt like children in the dark ; when eventually news did begin to come through, the adjective "official" as applied to it was for a long time to many people synonymous with "apocryphal." This was partly because Government had meanwhile consolidated its resources, and was now able to deal the rebels blow after blow. The despatches seemed too good to be true, but they were true nevertheless.

The speedy collapse of a very ugly-looking danger was due to the inherent weakness of the rebel system. Beyers

wanted passive, though armed, resistance. De Wet, fiery and impetuous, was all for the coercion of the loyal population, pushing through to Maritz in order to obtain armaments, and forcing any contested position at the point of the mauser. He had no guns, an insufficiency of rifles, a piebald stock of ammunition. He had evidently forgotten the fact that presented itself to Smuts at once : the difference between this and the Boer War made by the presence of many motor-cars in the country. He had forgotten, too, the radical change in the situation owing to the extension of railways, particularly in his own Province. He had failed to allow for the circumstance that, whilst in 1899–1902 he fought chiefly against Uitlanders, he now had Afrikanders tracking him.

He did not know—although Wessels knew—when he took the field whether Wessel Wessels would be on his side. And yet Wessel Wessels, who had been De Wet's successor as a member of our Defence Council, became his Assistant Commandant-General in the "protest." De Wet sent rebel appointments to careful politicians who refused to accept them, and he generally showed that he was no longer the organizer he had been in his younger days. The lack of cohesion and the other factors militating against the success of the insurrection were bound to tell before long. When General Botha personally took the field, the beginning of the end came at Mushroom Valley. Smuts' prediction had become a fact within a few days of its having been uttered. De Wet made a splendid march in the direction of Beyers, but Beyers' men had been dispersed. De Wet let his burghers go home, and fled to the Bechuanaland desert, where he was captured at Waterbury by Colonel Jordaan, under Coen Brits' directions. A series of night marches, performed by General Botha in the Free State under the most trying conditions of too much climate and too little commissariat, culminated early in December in the surrender of Wessels and his commandants. The rebellion was practically over.

A few of the leading facts have been stated here, because

so much arrant nonsense has been spoken and written about this most regrettable rising that the average man may well be excused if he fails to grasp its meaning, even to-day. On the one side it was represented as something unprecedented in the annals of the world, as if every country had not had similar episodes to bewail. Then, again, the casual reference by De Wet at Vrede to a fine of five shillings, inflicted on him by a magistrate in a native case, has been exploited by a large section of our Press—probably through ignorance, for which at the time it was hardly to blame, although a little imagination would have prevented publicists from giving the celebrated "five bob" incident undue importance. It would take me too far afield to explain thoroughly what the silver crown really stood for, and how De Wet was swayed by local and personal grievances, which at the same time were interwoven with dissatisfaction at the new status of aborigines under the British Flag.

It would be folly to think that more than ten thousand men rose in arms in order to avenge a five-shilling fine, of which most of them knew nothing. But it is no exaggeration to say that, in the north-eastern Free State, De Wet's personal influence went for a great deal. The Boer's instinct is to follow his leader, and to trust him implicitly so long as he trusts him at all. To many, the knowledge that there was at least a chance of regaining independence was enough, once they heard De Wet and other popular war-lords were out and about: A large number of burghers were misled by the statement that "the Government" (especially Botha and Smuts) were behind the movement. The most extravagant tales regarding accretions to the rebel forces and defeats of Government troops were spread. Maritz was "at Kimberley, with hundreds of German guns." Maritz was there still when the last vestige of hope had vanished! Some were intimidated, because General De Wet issued orders that all horses had to be taken, even from the "maim and the halt." Other rebel proclamations threatened non-combatants who showed themselves beyond the boundaries of their farms with death. Confiscation of private property and a strong

dip into the pockets of the Johannesburg mining magnates, in order to fill the terrible void in the rebel exchequer, were announced as future measures. Shops were looted, bridges destroyed, trains and other State property seized; loyal citizens were gaoled and sometimes ill-treated; the Basutos were asked to hold themselves in readiness in order to take a hand, should "the English employ coolies against us," and other steps were taken in order to demonstrate the complete innocuousness of this "protest."

For the nonsensical talk about the rebellion was not confined to one side. The political supporters of the militant protestants maintained as long as they possibly could—nay, longer!—the fiction of a vengeful, remorseless, bloodthirsty Government, bent upon sanguinary and fratricidal feud. Smuts more than any one else has been the butt of their calumny. Because he does not carry his heart on his sleeve, it has been assumed, or at least asserted, that he delighted in this man-hunt. Some South Africans, who knew more about him, and yet not enough, predicted Botha's and his immediate resignation when it became known in October 1914 that Beyers was occupying a Cave of Adullam near Scheerpoort. They were reckoning without the sense of responsibility of these men and their colleagues, which was the anodyne dulling the most excruciating pain that ever could, or ever can, pierce their souls. Heaven knows that their task of pursuing old comrades was made difficult enough by both sides. Among the English the Government's delay in massing forces against De Wet; the orders given by General Botha not to fire except in case of necessity; the generous terms of the amnesty proclamation; the lightness of the Special Courts' sentences, and the leniency of Ministers in reducing even these, have been violently assailed. The Dutch as a whole erred in the opposite direction. Neither side was in the humour to appreciate even that which was admirable in its adversaries. And so that marvellous ride by Kemp through the Kalahari (made possible only by exceptionally heavy rains) has hardly received its due meed of praise from

the purely military point of view, nor has the laudable trait shown by many rebels of voluntarily contributing large sums to *Helpmakaar* funds attracted much attention.[1]

The rebellion drove the wedge of division more deeply than ever into the body of Dutch Afrikanderism. There need be no hair-splitting as to its significance to-day. Concerning its origin much more might be said than has been set forth in this chapter. The official Nationalist version of its development has been embodied in a pamphlet by Mr. H. S. Webb, of Pretoria (*The Causes of the Rebellion*). This little book contains several passages in which the aggressive side of the movement is fully admitted. No one reading it carefully can escape the conclusion that the leaders, by protesting thus against the Union's share in a warlike enterprise, adopted the Irish recipe of killing a fowl to save its life. They multiplied the shedding of blood both directly and indirectly, because their actions caused a considerable prolongation of the South-West campaign. They depleted the ranks of the Botha party, which was part of their intention, but they very largely doomed the South African Dutchman to political impotence—an object which lay far from their goal. They plunged their followers into an adventure without providing even a tolerable fighting chance. They broke oaths as lightly as they broke heads.

It is difficult for us, who were partisans in the quarrel, to extenuate, though it be easy to abstain from setting down aught in malice. But Time, the great healer, will order History, his placid handmaiden, to write down judgment clear and mellow on her parchment sere and yellow. The right perspective will be gained by unprejudiced analogy. Crimes and blunders will fall into

[1] The business and political methods of the *Helpmakaar* (Mutual Aid) associations are open to grave objections, but this should not blind us to the nature of their inception, which was a credit to the *esprit de corps* among the rank and file. They also proved of great practical help to the Government, which might have had to meet a huge bill for compensation to loyalists if the rebels had not banded themselves together after their release.

their places among the chronicles of nationality in the heyday of its erring youth. The feverish leap of a race's pulse must be reckoned a symptom. The baser side of motive will fade; the nobler impulse, ready to make spontaneous sacrifice for an ideal—mistaken though it be—shall surge as precious metal through the mass of dross. When that day arrives, Jan Smuts will come into his own with those among his people who to-day cannot accept him for what he is.

Three months passed between Maritz's puerile *coup d'état* and his disappearance from the field. What those three months were to Smuts will never be known. General Botha, shortly before the New Year, proclaimed to the world what South Africa owed to his colleague. In a Reuter interview, he said: "Nobody can appreciate sufficiently the great work General Smuts has done. It has been greater than any other man's throughout this unhappy period. He was at his post day and night. His brilliant intellect, his calm judgment, his amazing energy, his undaunted courage, have been assets of inestimable value to the Union in the hour of trial."

We did not see much of Smuts in those days. He was unapproachable, except to those who had business with him. I remember, however, a conversation at his house in October 1914, after Maritz's day, and before Vrede. The public did not know as yet how grave and imminent the danger was. He knew, and he suffered. Carking care made him silent, sombre, sullen. He could not bring himself to accept the fact that his people would listen to the siren voice in the far-off sea of sand; that they would bite and snap at the child-State in whose parentage they had a share. Modern tendencies and latter-day beliefs were discussed. He admitted that, having drunk at the source of transcendentalist wisdom, he could not stand precisely where generations of his ancestors had stood. Yet he added that deep, deep down in recesses of his nature, which he himself could not plumb, the

religious conceptions and feelings drunk in at his mother's knee in that little corner of Riebeek West rested unpolluted. As she had inherited them from her forefathers and passed them on, so his apperception (he used the Kantian term) showed them to be there still, at his core. He remained a child of his race and of his Church, though a new garment might cover him.

It was put to him whether that Church did not derive its principal claim to usefulness from its social cementing power in a relatively primitive and incoherent community; he was asked whether he did not consider the highly idealistic teachings of Paulinism, the complicated theological dogma of Calvinistic Christianity, above the heads of the bulk of his people. He would have none of it. "No, no," he replied; "my people are of essentially ethical stock. Their purity of race, despite the temptations by which they have been surrounded, would alone prove that. Look at most other countries where you had small colonies of whites among inferior coloured races."

He had faith in his own. In his enthusiasm he became re-animated. A year later he acknowledged that, among much that was great and good, the dry, sterile bones of legalism and formalism would sometimes protrude, "as with the ancient Hebrews."

On the 16th of December 1914 an action was fought at Nooitgedacht that stamped out the rebellion in the Transvaal. It was at heavy cost of life and consequence, for at Nooitgedacht Colonel N. J. Pretorius captured Commandant Joseph Fourie, and a few days later, in the Pretoria Prison, shots were fired that have not ceased to echo through South Africa.

XIX

NOOITGEDACHT TO KLERKSDORP

WHEN Irish intellectuals, Catalonian anarchists, Colorado miners, or Polish farmers take violent measures subversive of authority, they are not exactly surprised when the punishment they receive fits their crime. In South Africa, English and Dutch have rebelled too often to feel genuine contrition. But Jopie Fourie[1] was not surprised at his sentence. He made a defiant speech to the members of the court. He was a manly man, who asked for mercy to be shown to his brother. For himself he asked nothing. To do him justice, he would have disapproved of the lachrymose, maudlin display of (political) sentiment that was made a few times after his execution. Every Dutchman sympathizes with the grief inflicted on his parents and his wife; and it is easy to understand that Fourie's relatives found it hard to become reconciled to the fact that he had been the sole rebel who was put to death after capture. The zeal with which the National party appropriated the episode is another story.

There were many circumstances in connection with the shooting of Fourie that caused comment. It has been said that Fourie might have surrendered if the troops had not been "godless" enough to rush his position on Dingaan's Day, which is regarded as a sabbath day. The composition

[1] Not "Japie." Jopie is the diminutive of Jozef, or Joseph. Japie stands for Jakob. Fourie was caught north-west of Pretoria. The Nooitgedacht where General Clements fought during the Boer War lies in a different direction, south of the Magaliesberg.

and procedure of the special court have been criticized. The fact that the execution took place on a Sunday morning, and that the deputation which went to see General Smuts in order to ask for a reprieve did not obtain a hearing, has been made much of. The stir caused by the event has been used as an argument in favour of the contention that, if the technical correctness of the Government's action be conceded, its tactical wisdom was questionable. Taking the matter on its lowest level, General Smuts surely demonstrated that vote-catching considerations were not present in his mind when he signed the death-warrant. If the effect of the deed on Dutch-speaking South Africa, apart from party differences, be the criterion, it must be recognized that here was a question essentially for the Minister's discretion. He had to weigh whether Fourie's actions were such as required the extreme penalty, or whether the drawbacks attaching to such a course would outweigh the advantages of a vindication of the right of the State by military methods.

It is impossible to say whether Smuts realized to the full how immensely the emotions of his own race were to be affected by the shooting of this one man. Presumably he did. Stripped of all leather and prunello, the case amounts to this, that whereas dozens of leaders (including several who were of higher rank and greater influence) escaped severe punishment, Fourie was the only rebel to suffer what many might have expected to be their fate. Vicarious atonement has been mentioned, and motives have been imputed to Smuts that are connected with the death in action of a popular official, named Allan King, at the hands of Fourie's men. At the South African party Congress, held at Bloemfontein in 1915, the Minister, in reply to an interpellation, delivered a speech of which the following is a slightly abbreviated translation :—

"Fourie was called out with the Defence Force regiment of which he was an officer. He discussed matters with General Botha and myself, giving us the impression that he had no grievance. But he rebelled, and a number of men belonging to his regiment went out with him. He has shed

more blood than any other officer. I was obliged to take him seriously. . . . The rebellion was subsiding. Beyers was drowned. General De Wet surrendered when he saw himself hopelessly surrounded. At Reitz, General Botha had taken a large number of prisoners. Only Fourie's band remained contumacious. Twelve of our men were killed at Nooitgedacht. There was no justification for that. Some of them were shot at a range of twelve yards. Fourie was captured by Colonel Pretorius, a grandson of the late President Pretorius, and a cousin of Fourie's. It was not a question, therefore, of 'Khaki versus Boer,' but of the pith of the nation against a marauding band. A court-martial was appointed, strictly according to military law. One of its members told me that he felt compunction about serving, because he was a friend of Fourie's. I replied that that was an additional reason why he should go on the tribunal. On the Saturday, Fourie was unanimously condemned to death. Up till then, I had had to live at Pretoria, away from my family, but on that day for the first time it had been safe for me to enjoy some leisure at my house. I went for a walk on the estate, and while I was away a deputation came to interview me about the sentence. I was not aware of its coming, nor did I know that sentence had been pronounced. When I returned to the house, I telephoned to Irene in order that the deputation might be stopped there on its way back, but it had already passed. The same evening I went through the papers at Pretoria. Had I refused to confirm the sentence, I could not have faced the parents of the young men who found their deaths through Fourie's fault. There is something to be said for many a rebel, but in this case I conferred a great benefit on the State by carrying out my most unpleasant duty. This will be realized more and more as time goes on (applause)."[1]

Parliament met early in 1915. General Botha had left for German South-West Africa, and General Smuts, who had become senior Minister on Mr. Sauer's death, led the

[1] General Botha added that he and the whole of the Cabinet were co-responsible.

Assembly as Acting Premier. He announced that "he had long ago stated that his dual position as Minister of Defence and Minister of Finance was unsatisfactory; in the present circumstances it had become impossible." And therefore Sir David Graaff would take Finance.[1]

A Blue-book on the rebellion was laid on the Table. It had been prepared by a University professor of history, but it was badly received by the Nationalists. It had the merit of containing matter that was quite new to the public. Necessarily somewhat one-sided, and in places inclined to piece authentic details together by the exercise of the author's considerable powers of ratiocination, it was nevertheless a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the subject. In spite of cavilling, its critics have been unable to point out more than a very few inaccuracies in the text, and it proved valuable as a guide in the labyrinth of facts to him who was able to make his own deductions.

It was not a pleasant task for the Minister of Defence to have another Indemnity Bill to introduce, dealing with disturbances much exceeding the preceding ones in seriousness and magnitude. As on a previous occasion, the political associates of the persons affected moved heaven and earth to show that the blame lay not with those who had committed acts of violence, but with the Government that had suppressed them. General Hertzog and his supporters fought Smuts might and main. Injudicious speeches were made on both sides of the House. Some of the Unionists did not quite know where to draw the line, making recruits for Nationalism by the testy character of their repartee. It is true that there was not a little provocation. One or two of General Hertzog's admirers adopted the time-honoured plan of abusing "the plaintiff's attorney," seeing that they had no case. Salt tears were shed over "thoroughbred turkeys" that had been commandeered by the Government troops; vials of wrath were poured out over the heads of officers who had taken the remaining

[1] General Smuts had, however, had so much to do with the drafting of the Estimates that it was he who delivered the Budget speech.

hacks in districts cleared by the rebels of serviceable horses. Mr. H. E. S. Fremantle, the *fidus Achates* of the Nationalist leader, excelled in proving that black was white. South African party members who had taken an active part in putting down the insurrection were attacked with the utmost bitterness, and paid the Nationalists back in their own coin.

It was not a pleasant Session, but General Smuts held his own, assisted by Mr. N. J. De Wet, Minister of Justice, who did a great deal of the work. In moving the second reading of the Indemnity Bill, Smuts gave the same clear exposition that had marked his work of twelve months before, only this time he had superabundant proof, and his speech was correspondingly short. He scouted the idea that a mere protest against a wicked congeries of politicians had been made, praising De Wet inasmuch as he, at least, was not the man to risk the lives of his friends for flimsy reasons. He did not fail to blame some of the Nationalist agitators for the harm they had wrought by inflaming the imagination of the rank and file.

"One of the most powerful contributory causes to the rebellion," he maintained, "was the campaign of calumny against the Prime Minister. The Dutch people do not draw any fine distinctions, and by a process of reiteration a soil was created into which the fruitful seed fell. . . . I know what temptations to resign General Botha has experienced during the last few years, but he stuck to his post because he saw danger ahead."

Even now, Government did not use the policy of the big stick. In response to Nationalist appeals, it allowed amendments to the Indemnity Bill, ameliorating the prospects of the rebels who were awaiting trial. Some of the successful members warmly thanked the Minister for his merciful treatment of vanquished opponents, but this mood on their part was of short duration. A portion of the English population did not like the Cabinet's magnanimity; the *Rand Daily Mail* of the 27th of March cartooned Smuts, holding a knife marked "Amendments," with which he

"whittled down" the Indemnity Bill rod. The figure of South Africa, looking on, was represented as saying: "If you cut off much more, the stick will be so thin it won't punish him at all." The Nationalists, on the other hand, were untiring in their complaints about the prison treatment of rebels. The accommodation was certainly not perfect, but no Government could have provided for such an unexpectedly large number of guests.

In April 1915 Smuts felt that he wanted a change of air. Or, perhaps, it is difficult for him to know of an altercation going on in the neighbourhood without showing his own mettle. He was not away long in German South-West Africa, but he covered much ground. It is related that, with his customary push and impatience, he gradually left every member of his Staff behind him as he travelled from the coast to the interior, and that within a few days even his acting secretary, Mr. P. S. Krige (his brother-in-law, who had been through the Boer War with him), suddenly found himself stranded in the lonely desert. Food and water were minor considerations, and at last the General reaped the reward of his perseverance, for he was captured by one of our own patrols. General Botha harried the main German force in the north. General Smuts drove them smartly from the south, and when his movements had been sufficiently successful to point to the nearness of the enemy's surrender, he thought it time to return to the Union, where he arrived in May, not a day too soon.

On the 6th of April he had sent a telegram to the Mayor of Johannesburg, deprecating the holding of public meetings in order to protest against the way in which the Defence Department dealt with the internment of Germans, enemy trading, and so forth. An agitation, warmly supported by a section of the Press, had been going on for some time in connection with these subjects. When the *Lusitania* was torpedoed, the Johannesburg patriots felt called upon to show Smuts and Botha—who were braving the perils of a desert full of dynamite in German South-West Africa—how to manage affairs of State. Huge processions, duly

provided with typewritten lists of premises occupied by obnoxious firms, took the glorious work in hand. Offices, warehouses, shops, private residences were wrecked, thoroughly "overhauled" as to their contents, and then burnt. The police were of opinion that the job was too big a one for them to tackle, beyond a certain point. They saved a considerable amount of property, but the number and size of the buildings fired were large enough to have caused a conflagration which would have decimated Johannesburg if the wind had been "propitious." At Krugersdorp and elsewhere in the mining area similar scenes were witnessed.

One must shamefacedly admit that the public of Pretoria fell far short of the Rand standard of patriotism. At the capital, we were musical enough, and we smashed a few windows, but that was about the extent of the damage. Twenty-four hours afterwards, Cape Town continued on a slightly more modest scale what Johannesburg had so valiantly initiated. When midnight struck, and the staid Capetonian had retired to his virtuous couch, the troops (of whom there were a great number encamped in the suburbs) gained a bloodless victory by "restoring order." Maritzburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth followed suit.

After the ball was over, a casual survey showed that hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of commodities which the Union could ill afford to do without had fed the splendid flame of indignation. British insurance companies and British landlords were the chief sufferers. Next came German occupiers, naturalized or unnaturalized, French-speaking natives of Switzerland with German names, Russians with suspicious patronymics, Hollanders, and others. A repetition of the disorders was feared until Oom Jannie installed himself once again at Pretoria. His "velvet glove" of 1907 still clothed the mailed fist, for he was the first to be struck with the idea that it would not be altogether out of place to send an apology to the Netherlands Consul-General for the burning of the vice-consulate of Holland at Port Natal.

Most of the daily newspapers praised our outburst of heroism with faint damns. An ex-Minister of Natal (the Hon. Mr. Maydon) threatened the Government with all sorts of horrible consequences if it prosecuted the Maritzburg railway employees, who had shown exceptional zeal in demonstrating their fiery loyalty.

To give our public prosecutors their due, several of them rose to the occasion by tempering the wind to the shorn lamb; there were magistrates, too, who showed a keen appreciation of the truths grouped together under the name of "psychology of the masses," by treating with unexampled leniency men found guilty of arson, theft, and incitement to violence. The Nationalist party laughed in its sleeve, for hundreds of abandoned subjects to whom the torch and the swag-bag make no appeal turned against the Government, indulging in unpleasant comparisons between the way in which the little nocturnal picnic and previous serious disorders had respectively been dealt with.

The cause of the internment of Germans by the Government was certainly promoted by the disturbances. It may be doubted, however, whether on striking a balance the Union could congratulate itself on the net result of the May escapade. Allowance has to be made for the emotion caused by the *Lusitania* horror, but there should at least be some attempt to hit the guilty parties when punishment has to be meted out. If Charles Lamb had lived in our time, he would hardly have dared to vent his sarcasm on the Chinese for *their* way of preparing roast pig![1]

[1] In 1916 a Select Committee of the Union Assembly inquired into the *Lusitania* riots. Comparatively few witnesses took the trouble to journey from the interior to Cape Town in order to give evidence. A unanimous report wound up with the conclusion that what had happened "reflected no credit on the communities concerned." This was putting it mildly. General Botha, as recently as July 1916, roundly condemned the action of the instigators in the course of a speech to his constituents at Ventersdorp. He spoke of the "cowardly war on women and children," adding that when he and some of his officers in German South-West Africa heard of the riots, they were so utterly disgusted with what went on behind their backs that they would have liked nothing better

At the end of May and in the beginning of June the Minister of Defence addressed several bodies of time-expired volunteers who had obtained their discharge. At Pretoria and elsewhere he thanked them for their services, reminding them that "before they went to German South-West, they had heard terrible stories about big deserts, huge guns, and strong forts . . . but it was good country, in which stock waxed fat." At Booysens, he complimented the Imperial Light Horse on "having stood the desert test, which was worse than the test of blood." He added that he felt sure they would fight again, if called upon. At Potchefstroom he advised his hearers to cultivate a thick epidermis, for when they returned to their farms they would have to listen to all kinds of stories and criticisms, which they should disregard.[1]

On the 12th of July 1915 General Smuts issued a general order warmly congratulating "the General Officer Commanding the expeditionary forces, his Staff, and all ranks" on the successful issue of the campaign. The order mentioned the difficulties that had been overcome in this "the first achievement of a united South African nation; both races have combined all their best and most virile characteristics. . . ."

There had been some friction in South-West Africa, as was almost unavoidable where two races fought side by side. A pusillanimous general might have conveniently ignored this; Smuts did not. "If differences of opinion have arisen," the document continued, "minor disappoint-

than to throw up their work and return to the Union post-haste. As a matter of fact, the Premier at the time sent a message (which was published) admonishing the culprits.

[1] As it had been in the Boer War, so it was now: the hand of the father was often against the son, and neighbours became deadly enemies. The late rebels and their friends were fond of describing the men in khaki as "bloodhounds, who had chased their kith and kin for the sake of five shillings a day." Political strife degenerated into social intolerance. Fortunately, matters improved after the general election, later in the same year. It should be noted that the discharge of volunteers was usually carried out in true South African fashion, i.e. with a minimum of martial pomp.

ments, petty grievances and jealousies, these can speedily be forgotten and buried in oblivion when the broad result, creditable in equal measure to all those who have striven to attain it, is considered. . . . The task remains so to profit by the invaluable experience gained during the last eleven months as to bring the military organization of the Union to such a high standard of efficiency, compatible with economy, that it may continue to be a source of legitimate pride to the people of South Africa."

The old note is sounded: do not be inflated by success; let it be a spur to further effort.

Now that the campaign was over, it became a question —decided only when General Botha returned to Cape Town—whether there should be a general election amidst war conditions. The Nationalists prepared for the fray by heaping ridicule on the Government because the number of German troops caught was so small. They quite forgot that in their opposition to the campaign they themselves had predicted, less than twelve months previously, that Smuts' army would leave no more than its bleaching bones in the desert, that the German forts were impregnable, and the German troops too strong for us.

The English section of the population, through its platform speakers and its Press, showed dissatisfaction on the ground that the terms conceded at the capitulation were too favourable to the enemy. A little later, as letters from the garrisons reached the Union, ridiculous complaints were made about "the Germans being still top-dog." Their officers, it was said, were strutting about; their merchants were still allowed to trade, and generally the garrisons did not feel that they were in the proud position of conquerors. It was subsequently proved that our Department of Defence had arranged the terms after consultation with the Imperial Government, and that, no annexation having taken place, the Union was bound to act according to the rules governing the mere military occupation of enemy territory. This, however, did not satisfy the valiant armchair critics, some of whom would

have loved nothing more dearly than that Botha and Smuts should have "out-Hunned the Huns."

The South African party Dutch had ideas of their own on the subject of arrears of military pay, possession of arms and ammunition, the attitude of released rebels towards themselves, and so forth. It was, therefore, not a very thankful atmosphere in which the two Generals moved when Botha landed on our shores. The rumour factory was working at full pressure. General Hertzog and others had sedulously propagated the fiction that, according to Smuts, our Constitution would be suspended in certain eventualities. This tale was flatly contradicted by the Minister before he travelled to Cape Town at the end of July, in order to welcome the Premier. In spite of carping criticism, General Botha had a magnificent reception everywhere. In places it was a little loud, perhaps, but that is to be expected in war-time.

At Cape Town, General Smuts made a speech in which he pointed out that a campaign had been won without a staff of experts. The Union, he said, had made bricks without straw; it had "muddled through until success came." His Department had been attacked, often unjustly, he thought; for the officials had worked day and night. A large quantity of poor material had been used, but South Africa was isolated owing to the scarcity of shipping, and it had been obliged to provide its own requirements. This had been the first campaign of South Africans in which sea traffic had played a part, yet there had been no landing facilities in South-West Africa, and this had appreciably delayed operations. Had the Government sent too many men, there would not have been water enough in the interior; had there been too few, the Germans would have taken them prisoners. This difficulty was overcome by a simultaneous attack from five different points. There was a risk, because the Germans, who held the railways in the centre, might have defeated these separate divisions one by one. The scheme succeeded, however; it involved the construction of wells in a desert

tract on the eastern side, 120 miles broad. This was the only plan by which the transport of the troops which had to attack on that side was made possible. (He might have added that this was a desperate undertaking, which occupied months and swallowed treasure. But when it was finished, the Germans were caught in a part of their territory that they had considered invulnerable.) The country, he said, was a valuable asset, well worth the fifteen millions or so that we had spent on its conquest. What was worth more was the fact that we had done our duty, and that Government had asserted its authority in spite of threats. There were phases in the lives of nations, as of individuals, in which money considerations did not count. Besides, it might be considered that we had paid an insurance premium for the existence of a free white race, because at some time or other we should have had to fight a powerful neighbour for supremacy. The Union would have to absorb German South-West Africa, or else German South-West Africa would one day absorb the Union. The whole world would have to take notice that we wanted to keep what we had taken. He drew attention to the equal numbers of the fallen on the Government side in the expedition and the rebellion combined; 127 men with English names, 126 men with Dutch names. And, he concluded, we had not finished yet, but a new foundation of trust and mutual help had been laid.

At Pretoria, General Botha publicly thanked his colleague for his magnificent organizing work and his valuable suggestions, adding that "South Africa might well be proud of having produced a man of such talents."

Smuts replied that, though words of praise were not deserved, he accepted them as a tribute to the Defence Department, "from the Secretary down to the lowest daily-paid official." It was a matter for gratitude to him that the first great gathering at the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings was held in celebration of a notable achievement on the part of the peoples of South Africa—white and coloured both.

On the 3rd of August the two Generals made their triumphal entry into Johannesburg, where the enthusiasm was such as to sweep away any adverse criticism. Smuts here recognized the good work done by Lord Buxton, who "has been very closely associated with me in all the troubles through which the country has been passing." Botha's services in German South-West Africa, he continued, were small, compared to those he had rendered during the rebellion. Few people were aware of what the Premier had then passed through. He lost the friendships of a lifetime, friendships he valued perhaps more than anything else in life. There was a time when the rebellion looked very serious and when the Government had not known "whether it stood on its head or on its feet." German South-West Africa, too, had had the makings of a very great fiasco, but General Botha had been the first man to volunteer, and when that happened he, the speaker, had "known that the impossible had become possible." In the previous purely South African campaign carried on without Imperial assistance (the Basuto War of 1881), the failure of the Cape Government to gain its end had been very largely to blame for the despondency which caused South-West Africa to fall into German hands. "That shows how necessary it is to carry these jobs through. When the war broke out, we promised the Imperial Government to look after the safety of South Africa. I am not electioneering now (laughter). But I must point out that we are bound by this promise, and that other people are not (renewed laughter)."

In the same month, he spoke at the South African party Club at Johannesburg, denying Nationalist statements to the effect that the Premier had "changed and become an Englishman." He recalled the Convention spirit and the fine promise of co-operation that flowered at the time of Union. "Since then," he maintained, "others have changed, not we. . . . We want one South Africa, one united people. Five years hence, or fifty years hence, our party will still stand where it now stands. . . . Before the Boer War we had a divided people, the old popu-

lation and the Uitlanders. The result of that system was blood and tears. . . . Within the past couple of years there has been a reaction against the one-stream policy. Have we not had bloodshed in the past twelve months as a consequence of this? . . . The only way is to carry out the compromise of five years ago. We shall best do that by living in amity with our neighbours, forgiving and, where possible, forgetting. . . . If we continue on the road of Union, our northern boundaries will not remain where they now are. We shall leave to our children a huge country in which they will develop a type for themselves, forming a people that will be a true civilizing agency. . . ."

He asked for a fresh mandate to General Botha, for "those who have stood by the people night and day in order to save the country have the right to come now and ask for the country's support." [1]

The election campaign had begun. At a Congress of Nationalists, held at Pretoria in August, the chairman of the Transvaal branch of the party—who about this time distinguished himself by stating that "some Ministers were no better than hysterical old Kaffir hags"—announced his intention of "insisting that practically every civil servant should become bi-lingual within a few months" (which meant the dismissal of most of the English officials) if his party came into power. Another member of their Head Committee admitted that his grievance against Botha and Smuts was that they had consistently pursued their policy of good-will towards the English; he and his, he said, had always understood that the two leaders were but making a show of co-operation, and that when the favourable moment arrived they would turn round. A certain Roux told the Congress

[1] General Smuts got his answer from a grateful(?) electorate two months later. The Unionists insisted on the withdrawal of almost every South African party candidate on the Rand. Where a Unionist (official or independent) opposed a South African party man in Cape Colony or Natal, the latter was almost invariably beaten. Maritzburg South, Three Rivers, and Grahamstown are cases in point. The Boer vote, too, went to a large extent against the Government, and the Nationalists gained many seats.

that he had walked about for some time "with dynamite in his pocket for Botha and Smuts." Roux long afterwards denied that he had said just this, but when another delegate drew attention to the matter, the chairman stated that such utterances were beneath the notice of the Congress.

While some of Smuts' fellow-Dutchmen were treating him thus at Pretoria, the South African party met at Bloemfontein. After the presidential address there were loud cries of "Jannie." When General Smuts rose to speak (in Dutch), the Congress rose also, and he was given an ovation, eloquent in view of his share in recent events. "The South African party," he claimed, "is a rock. Without it, what would have become of South Africa in the troublous times through which we have passed? Posterity will revere General Botha's memory for hundreds of years to come. . . . But I wish to correct him in one particular. He said that, five years ago, we decided on the principle of national unity. This has been our principle ever since I cut my political wisdom-teeth (*sedert ik myn verstand heb*). . . . It was in the Bond programme. Twenty years ago, Jan Hofmeyr shook our people into political consciousness. In those days, too, there were men who thought his policy too flabby, too soft. . . . But unless the two sections trust each other, we shall yet become the football of Europe."

At the end of August 1915 Smuts visited Klerksdorp, where he bade the English voter support the Government, asking: "Have we not played the game? Did we not do our duty in the most painful circumstances? The English now know that the Dutch may be trusted. The Government asks you for a majority." He pointed out that Kemp had refused to fight the Germans, but had not scrupled to invade the Union with German cannon. He told his audience that, when he visited London in 1906, he had assured the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Asquith that the Boers might be trusted, and he had now redeemed his bond. England had done an injustice to the Boers, but it had done its best to make up for that.

This speech was turned to account by the Nationalists.

His "have we not played the game?" became a reproach with which they insinuated that Smuts had favoured the British, while oppressing his own race. This was the *leitmotiv* on which they trilled endless *fioriture* during the medley of discords that followed.

XX

KLERKSDORP TO POTCHEFSTROOM

To his "have we not played the game?" Smuts added, "we shall continue to play the game," right through the general election of 1915. He frankly turned this election into a khaki contest by telling his hearers that all else paled into insignificance, compared with the necessity for winning the war. Yet, by the Cabinet's liberality, the rank and file of the rebels were not disfranchised, so that, while the war was still in progress, they obtained the lever of the ballot-box against a policy they had attempted to upset with the rifle-barrel. This fact, however, was unable to induce in Nationalists anything like a reasonable frame of mind. Their fulcrum was prejudice, and the election was fought with an acrimony such as I, at any rate, had never witnessed. Female suffrage is an excellent ideal, but those of its advocates who imagine that the active participation of women in politics tends to invest a campaign with seraphic sweetness should take warning from our practical experience. The female members of the Nationalist party introduced a fierce emotionalism into the struggle that will be long remembered.

With many, of course, it was a crime and a sin that the Government had not stood aloof in the war, but there were "aggravating circumstances"—for instance, the actions of Ministers towards the rebels—which recoiled with special force on Smuts' head. The shooting of Fourie and the *Lusitania* disorders lost the Government thousands of votes.

The anti-sedition movement, which flourished during the rebellion period, was another feather in the Nationalist cap.[1] Of the three Dutch Churches, the "United" alone contained a fair proportion of ministers willing to support authority. The "Hervormde" and "Gereformeerde" clergymen threw the weight of their influence almost entirely on the anti-Government side. Mr. Patrick Duncan's admission in Parliament to the effect that "the harness was chafing" the Dutch was freely quoted. Nationalist colours and buttons with portraits of rebel leaders were worn everywhere, even by the schoolchildren. Postcards showing coffins, surrounded by the likenesses of Beyers, Fourie, and De la Rey were sold in their thousands. The most violent cartoons were published against Botha and Smuts by *De Burger*, a Cape Town Nationalist organ which printed its first issue when General Botha returned from German South-West Africa.

The usual excitement and lack of mental balance that accompany general elections were intensified by the war fever and the aftermath of the rebellion. Botha and Smuts were almost invariably represented by the anti-war faction as vile, inhuman monsters, while the leaders on the other side, of course, shone resplendent with sprouting wings. Anything said to their detriment was "a jingo libel and an injustice to the Afrikanders." Nationalism (behind its racial fan) flirted outrageously with Labour—High-Toryism with extreme Socialism. An important plank in the Nationalist platform was the immediate release of the imprisoned rebel leaders; another was the definite prediction,

[1] At one time we almost had a reign of terror. Magistrates, evidently opposed to the good old maxim, "If the missus wants to talk, let 'er talk," imposed ridiculous sentences. One man was fined £25 because he had expressed the opinion—apart from his desire—that the Russians would never enter Berlin. A cook was severely punished because she had written a letter, which was opened by the censor, asking her mother to pray for the Kaiser—Mr. Brown, M.L.A., afterwards said in Parliament that this sentence was obviously absurd, because the Kaiser stood in great need of intercession on his behalf.

in spite of Ministers' denials, that Dutchmen would be commandeered for Flanders or for East Africa.

If one can find little that is admirable in the tactics of Smuts' opponents during this period, it must not be understood that what has been said in this volume is meant to constitute a final or complete judgment of them. It would be wonderful, especially with so many extremists in the Unionist ranks, if South Africa's past history had not produced some such party as the Nationalists of to-day. However strongly one may differ from their aims and methods, it would be unjust if allowance were not made for the circumstances that gave their movement birth and colour. Smuts himself said to me once : "We have been going very, very fast in South Africa, and it is not surprising that some of our people are unable to keep pace."

I have not made the faintest attempt to assign to leading men of any party mentioned in these pages their exact place in South African history. Rhodes' connection with the Raid is not the only criterion by which he should be measured, nor is Hertzog's attitude on this or that occasion a safe means of predicting how posterity will regard the Nationalist leader. And the same is true of others, less prominently named.

Early in September 1915 the battle of the polls commenced in good earnest. Smuts was warned against the risk he ran in standing for Pretoria West, but after a little mystification he decided to take that risk, and when he first appeared among his constituents he informed them that, in five years' time, they would elect him again. He said, with all truth, that he had never known the art of flattering them, and that he was not going to learn it now. The deportation he defended, in the teeth of much Labour opposition, as having been an indispensable step. He complained of the wholesale Nationalist insinuations against him, and assured his hearers that no one knew his faults better than himself. If it appeared that he was not wanted, he would not rend the Dutch people in twain, but "seek the shade of a large tree, and read some interesting book or

other." [1] But as long as he was needed, he would continue to work for the State.

He fought hard, not only in his own ward, but in several districts where South African party candidates needed support. He had never before been heckled to such an extent. *De Volkstem* said, in a leading article, that a man like Smuts might be saved the ordinary electioneering indignities, but I have listened to a lengthy cross-examination on high politics by a printer's devil. On the 9th of September he was plastered with eggs and over-ripe tomatoes at a Pretoria meeting. As a rule these articles only figure in humorous election literature, but this time there was raw material for many tomato omelettes. Angry cries greeted him as he appeared. "You've cheated us too often," the scum of the capital shouted; "we want a member with a white man's heart. Where is Jopie Fourie? Murderer!" The Minister retorted by denying Christian virtue to his interrupters, who tersely replied that it was not for him to take the name of Christianity into his mouth! After an hour of this species of argument, the candidate wiped the ammunition from his coat and retired. The old Transvaal Volkslied was sung; cheers and counter-cheers were given; some one wished to hand Smuts a letter, which he curtly refused to accept. At last, he bowed himself politely out of the foul-mouthed throng, and motored away.

A few days later, at a perfectly orderly Pretoria gathering, he called himself the "best-hated man in South Africa." But philosophically he consoled himself with the reflection that his enemies of to-day might love him to-morrow, recognition of good work often coming with the effluxion of time. There were men, he said, who were thirsting for his and General Botha's blood, "well knowing that, once these

[1] He did not give this assurance for the benefit of his constituents only. At a moment when his chances were considered anything but rosy, I heard him say to Mrs. Smuts: "How pleasant it would be if I could come home and spend my time on the farm." That he meant it, I am as firmly convinced as I believe that a truly rural existence would soon pall on him.

two figures were removed, the coast would be clear for revolutionary schemes." The men who had egged on the rebels, but who lacked the courage to come into the open, were still, he said, as busy as ever.

Smuts will never allow the slightest aspersion to be cast on his veracity, and when a man bearing the historic name of Cronje impugned it at this gathering, without meeting the challenge to produce proof, the candidate was rendered almost speechless by just anger.

On the 11th of September the *Rand Daily Mail* (voicing previously inarticulate criticism on Smuts' supposed share in a Witwatersrand party deal) published a cartoon entitled "The Long Arm of Coincidence." It showed Smuts and Smartt as schoolboys, making corresponding corrections on their respective slates. There had been South African party as well as Unionist denials of the deal, and the *Mail* remarked: "Funny they should both be doing the same thing, and yet neither knows what the other is doing."

The question of pay for our contingents was frequently raised. An increase, Smuts said, would have his support, but the question could not be forced.[1]

On the 14th of September he spoke at two remote meeting-places in the Pretoria district. Arriving home late that night, after a fatiguing motor journey, he left the next morning early for Johannesburg, where he kept an appointment of some importance. From there his motor took him to Potchefstroom, where he discussed military affairs with General Lukin. From Potchefstroom he was taken to Lichtenburg. The total distance covered since he left his house that morning was about 170 miles, but just as the young men of Lichtenburg were preparing to ride out in order to meet him in cavalcade outside the township, he drew up on the market square. It was only for a moment, for his first business was a visit to the widow of General De la Rey. This was an act of courtesy and moral courage,

[1] This remained his attitude. The advice it contained was proved in Parliament to have been sound, for General Botha subsequently threatened to resign if the matter were pressed to a division.

well worthy to crown an energetic day, because Mrs. De la Rey was known as . . . well, not exactly a Government supporter.

On the morning of the 15th he addressed a meeting at Lichtenburg, rebuking those who continued to accuse the Government of having wilfully caused De la Rey's death. But if another rebellion broke out that very day, he assured them, he would do his duty as unflinchingly as he had done it in the past. Yet he announced his eagerness to welcome back the rebels into the broad fold if they showed a proper spirit, and he diagnosed "high politics" as a wasting disease from which the Union was suffering. There was a little opposition (he was in the heart of the rebel country), but this he bore down with great good-humour.

The next day he spoke in the back-blocks of the district. The party candidate was a soft-spoken local notability, who had as much chance of being returned as the proverbial celluloid dog has of worsting the equally proverbial asbestos cat in the climate of the nether regions. But Smuts, with great cheerfulness, preached the party gospel for some hours. He barely gave himself time for a meal, and then returned to Johannesburg with General Brits. It struck me on the way back that he was gloomy, and I remarked that he had had a successful meeting. "Ay," he answered "too successful; the bounders won't turn up." This was in reference to the absence of opposition, due to the policy of the Nationalists in boycotting almost every South African party meeting in the districts. Suddenly he laughed, reminding us that the candidate had told his audience that he did not expect any one who did not thoroughly believe in his policy to vote for him. "How many votes," jocularly asked Smuts, "do you think I shall get in Pretoria West if I am as modest?"

The unhappy chauffeur had been at his wheel for nearly four hours when Ventersdorp was reached. We had been discussing the history of Smuts' military exploits in the neighbourhood and the gravamen of the charge brought against him by his new enemies, when suddenly a fresh

turn was given to the conversation. Observant as ever, he noticed that a number of Jewish inhabitants were walking the streets in fine raiment at an hour when they are usually at work. I told him that it was the eve of a festival and that they were going to synagogue. "Ah," he said, "that is good. Some of the higher elements are lacking in the Jewish religion, but it means that they are keeping up ancient customs." Many South Africans, whose superficial knowledge of Smuts makes them see in him a ruthless iconoclast, would have been surprised to hear him praise conservatism.

For five minutes we halted at Ventersdorp, and then the trek along almost impossible country roads, now stony, now deep in sand, now full of ruts, was resumed. On we went and on; not a moment's rest did that chauffeur get until Johannesburg was reached, after an eight hours' journey, during two of which our lives were several times in danger, or so, at least, it seemed to me. We were nearing the Mooi River when a garish sunset was followed by that sudden drop of temperature which is the rule in high, cloudless lands. When it catches you, you shiver, you draw your coat closer. You are in the grip of that piercing, insidious melancholy which is found nowhere but in spheres of gay sunshine—in Andalusia, in Sicily, in every clime that knows the orange blossom and the cypress—banned as it is from the North with its fog and sleet, the North which is "dark, and true, and tender."

The bright, indomitable fighter next to me was subdued by that creeping spirit. Somehow (I do not remember the genesis of this inaptness at such a time and place) the failure of my own career had come up. "Do not complain," he said brusquely. "You have enough to eat. You have no one whose fate depends on you. You have thoughts to call your own, and a certain amount of leisure. Look at me. Thousands, I suppose, envy me my place and power. Yet, what are they? My own people curse me; to tens of thousands my name is a by-word. Be satisfied!"

I tried to dissipate his bitter thoughts, speaking of the

many who acclaimed his coming, quoting commonplaces about the fickleness of Demos. But he refused to be comforted, and even dragged from the dungeons of his memory insulting offers that had been made to him by men who cannot realize that honour stands far above gain. After a while, he relapsed into a painful brooding silence. Conversation was not easy with a motor jolting its course, thirty miles to the hour, along roads that really belong to a bygone era.

However, in Johannesburg we arrived at last; there, although it was late, and in spite of election worries, Oom Jannie showed that he numbers the capacity for ordering —and enjoying—a good *à la carte* dinner among his attainments. The evening paper made General Brits yawn. And then we all yawned, and "so to bed." Early the next morning, I found on inquiry that Smuts had given me the slip. At Pretoria no one knew where he was, but it was afterwards discovered that he obtained a vote of confidence at a High Veld meeting that day, far away in the east, which meant another long motor drive before he returned to his house in the evening.

When Nationalists turned up at the country meetings he attended, he was usually heckled about South Africa's relation to the Empire. At Brits, an interrogator warned him that a "very awkward question" was going to be asked: Which comes first with you, South Africa or the Empire? Smuts replied (according to the report in the official Nationalist organ at Pretoria): "There is no question I could answer more easily; the interests of South Africa will always be first with me."

In Pretoria West, the Nationalist candidate in person cross-examined General Smuts, particularly as to whether the Government would commandeer for service oversea. The answer was: "Our Defence Act is good enough for me." (The Act allows commandeering only for service in South Africa, within or without the Union.)

The Minister of Defence's election activities naturally focussed attention on him, and many appreciations appeared

in the Press. The following is culled from a clever, if somewhat overdrawn sketch in that unique weekly, *The Cape* (Cape Town) :—

"General Smuts is so far from having got rid of his Dutch traditions, characteristics, sentiments, and instincts, that he actually represents in himself a distinct type of Afrikander which is familiar enough in the Cape. . . . From whichever side a criticism of the Government comes, be sure that the odium will fall on General Smuts. There could hardly be any greater tribute than this to the power which he wields in present-day politics. I do not subscribe to the view that General Botha is merely a puppet in the hands of General Smuts, but I do think that, if there had been no Smuts in Union politics, there would have been no Botha. . . . He directs all the machinery of Government and oils all the parts. He is always in the background, planning, calculating, plotting. Botha sits all day at a spotless table with a rectangle of virginal blotting-paper before him. Smuts burrows his way, from morning till night, through mountains of official documents. . . . It is quite true, I am afraid, that General Smuts' political methods are a trifle Oriental and despotic. He is, of course, a firm believer in constitutional and democratic government, but he is so steeped in the task of the direction and administration of affairs . . . that any obstacle in his path annoys and irritates him. . . . When the Government does anything great or heroic, it is always 'Bravo, Botha!' When it bumps up against public opinion, it is always 'Smuts' slimness.' He never takes a holiday. . . . He alone appears not to feel the need. What a fortunate thing that is for the Botha Ministry! . . ."

On the 23rd of September the infamous Newlands outrage took place. It is a pity to dissipate a pretty legend, but no other name can be given to the version according to which pistol-shots greeted him as he appeared on the platform. What happened was briefly this: He was warned against speaking at this remote suburb of Johannesburg, which is easily accessible to the lower orders. Why he

did not choose to display the better part of valour is matter for conjecture. As soon as he entered the hall, a din arose. His old, dynamic friend Roux was there, and so was Mary Fitzgerald. Mary excitedly exhibited an innocent brat, which, she said, was the orphan of a man killed by the troops in 1913. The remaining stock of eggs of Pretoria West, now a little more mature, were used as missiles. There is no trustworthy evidence as to *lycopersicum esculentum*, but a vast quantity of "matter in the wrong place," linguistic and otherwise, flew through the hall. Brickbats hurtled, and it was not long before free fights resulted from the grave disorder.

The platform was rushed, pantaloons were ripped up, and when at last the lamps were smashed, Smuts came to the conclusion that enough is quite as good as any feast. His motor was in waiting outside, but the company was in no mood to see the chief performer take French leave. Sticks, pickhandles, crowbars, and other instruments of suasion began to play their part. Blows were struck at the Minister and his companions. One of the chief sufferers was Hodgson, the chauffeur, to whose pluck and perseverance the lucky escape was principally due. Dynamite is supposed to have been present, but as to this one cannot speak with certainty. The situation became so threatening that one of the detectives on duty fired a revolver-shot to frighten the ruffians. Whether this was wise or otherwise is a moot point, but it certainly looked as if a determined attempt on Smuts' life was being made. A few more shots followed in rapid succession—by whom fired is not known—and at last a severely mauled party managed to get away. In such circumstances, one's powers of observation are apt to go awry, but the above is an impartial record, distilled from the newspaper polemics and from the court proceedings to which the affair led.

The next evening Smuts was due at a soldiers' sporting meeting in Pretoria. A cold gale blew all animation out of the open-air entertainment, but he kept his word. He was hoarse, depressed, and absent-minded, almost dis-

appearing in a huge khaki greatcoat. His speech was exceptionally short, and he wistfully looked up at the cloud-flecked sky. On such occasions, when the elemental man in him has been recently stirred, his accent is a little more pronounced than usual, but one has to know him well to detect any difference in his appearance. He cracked a few half-hearted jokes with friends, and then went off . . . to address a meeting of Greeks in his constituency on Homer, Apelles, the World War, the trend of retail commerce, the excellence of the South African party, and matters of that kind.

Shortly afterwards he was heard at large meetings in Waterberg, another ticklish constituency, where the commandeering question loomed large. Here he gave the assurance that, rather than compel our men to fight in Europe, he would resign. A Nationalist present repeated circumstantially an affecting story, which had gained general currency by this time: Jopie Fourie's body had descended into a nameless grave within the four walls of Pretoria gaol. He himself had witnessed the act, and two sacks full of quicklime had been emptied over the dead body.

As Smuts had previously stated that Fourie lay buried in the Pretoria cemetery, and that the grave would be pointed out to the relatives at the proper time, this imputation of untruthfulness angered him beyond measure. "Make an affidavit," he roared at the accuser, "and I shall have you prosecuted for perjury at once! You are a public liar!"

The man slunk away, and was not seen again. Some months afterwards the Fourie family identified the body of the executed man—which was in a remarkable state of preservation—beyond the possibility of doubt, by various distinct marks.

The Labour party had become sharply divided. The International Socialists carried on a war-on-war campaign; but by far the greater number of Labour men declared in favour of the Government's war policy. In view of this,

General Smuts appealed to his Labour opponent, Mr. George McLean, to withdraw, as a split vote would give Dr. Reitz, the Nationalist, a strong chance. Mr. McLean made a very fair response. As this is a khaki election, he said in effect, I shall withdraw if General Smuts undertakes to dissolve Parliament within six months of the declaration of peace. But the Minister was unable to accept this condition, and gave his reasons in a closely argued letter to the Press. "Dissolution," he reminded Mr. McLean, "is one of the few remaining prerogatives of the Crown."[1]

The shade of Jopie Fourie was invoked day after day, and his widow published a letter she had sent to Smuts, telling him that she would "call in the aid of my people," unless the grave was pointed out at once. The answer might have been foreseen. Smuts told her that it was against the public interest to have the spot known during the election; as soon as that was over, he would comply. And so it happened.

The London *Times*, commenting on the Newlands collision, drew attention to the worth of Smuts' work. "Perhaps," it speculated, "South Africans who have hitherto admired, without sympathy or liking, the rather hard brilliancy of General Smuts, may realize, having so nearly lost him, his value to South Africa and to the Empire. His enemies may thus have secured for him what, in comparison with other South African public men of far less ability, he has curiously lacked hitherto—a popular following."

There certainly was no hardness in his speeches to

[1] He continued: "If I survive the present election as a Minister of the Union, and survive also the Newlands tactics of my opponents and other accidents of Fate, there may possibly be a situation to face after the war which will as little allow of my deserting my post as the situation of the last twelve months. . . . I shall keep myself free and unpledged to render such services in the future as may be required of me by my plain and manifest duty. . . . I have heard nothing but good of Mr. McLean. The manner of his campaigning . . . is in striking contrast to that of the Nationalist candidate. . . ." (The latter's methods included passionate denunciations of General Smuts, to Nationalist audiences, for daring to approach English-speaking voters in English, whereas Dr. Reitz himself flooded the constituency with English literature.)

his constituents, and on one occasion he promised the Unionists and Labour men in Pretoria West that, if he were returned—he knew, of course, that that could only be by their aid—he would remember that it was not one section alone which had placed him at the top of the poll.

This frank statement led to increased vehemence of Nationalist attacks. The election hysteria was growing into something very nearly resembling midsummer madness, and there was fitness in the signs of ephemeral despondency present in his Potchefstroom speech of the 13th of October: "... I am a man of peace. General Hertzog says that Botha and Smuts must be got rid of. If it were a personal question, I should like nothing better than to be out of this hell into which I have wandered, and in which I have lived for the last two years. You may rely on it, however, that the Government will not leave you in the lurch. ... I shall work with my last breath for the good of South Africa."

XXI

POTCHEFSTROOM TO IRENE STATION

In order to show that his last word at Potchefstroom was to be relied on, General Smuts continued to make his shillelagh descend with undiminished force on the heads of his opponents. On the eve of the election he addressed two large mass meetings at Pretoria. He received warm ovations, and was carried to the platform on the shoulders of his admirers. The electors, he said, had to make up their minds as to whether they wanted the Botha policy or the Hertzog programme—no side issues! He blamed many clergymen for introducing politics at so-called prayer-meetings. This he considered blasphemous and beneath the dignity of the people of South Africa. He delivered himself of much more, but even the best of men will talk rhetoric at election-time.

On the day of the poll he was not at all confident. It is a charming custom with us that, by 4 p.m., every party proclaims its candidate to be safe; from that hour, it's only a question of the size of the majority, d'ye know! But General Smuts looked glum in the vicinity of the booth, late in the afternoon, and it was a pleasant surprise when the figures came out in the evening: Smuts, 1,102; Reitz, 808; McLean, 293. As in 1910, he had an absolute majority, but it was differently constituted. An overwhelming number of his late supporters had deserted him. In a letter of congratulation on his re-election, written that night, I took the great liberty of drawing some slight

moral from this fact, and then upbraided myself for a presumptuous, meddlesome fool! Jan Smuts, however, is big enough to overlook what many a smaller man might resent, and he sent an appreciative autograph reply by return of post.

In the beginning of November a recruiting conference was held at Pretoria. In the course of a long address, the Minister, with his usual generosity, paid a tribute to General Crewe (who was then Director of the recruiting department). He admitted that matters were not going so well as one would like to see, but urged further efforts, especially in order to assist in the East African campaign. "We must enlist the public sympathy," he said, "and obtain local support." It was a mistake, however, to accept volunteers "only fitted for the lunatic asylum." The vagaries of doctors, he did not forget to state, were "just as great as those of the rest of mankind."[1]

A few days afterwards he moved the principal resolution at a Johannesburg meeting of protest against the Cavell execution. He had a reception of unexampled heartiness, and I have never seen him so moved as he was on this occasion by the patent sincerity of the greeting. His speech was vigorously applauded, but he did not fail to remind the audience that "technically, Edith Cavell might have done something wrong. The facts are hardly known as yet." Nor did he omit to tell them that resolutions alone would not put Germans out of action, and that deeds were wanted. South Africa had suffered little so far, and it became her to make further sacrifices in the good cause. But there was no compulsion, and therefore voluntary effort must be stimulated.

Interviewed by Reuter on the same day as to rumours to the effect that he would take the East African command, he said that "he would not deny these." It became

[1] He gave one assurance which was founded on incorrect information, by whomsoever supplied. He denied that the Press censorship still existed, but it has survived—and very properly, in time of war—in a mild form until this very day.

known early in 1916 that he had been offered the command, but had thought it necessary to refuse. Local affairs claimed his attention, and it was expected that Manie Botha, Van Deventer or Brits would be sent out. Meanwhile the British Government sent pressing appeals for more South African volunteers, and some of our newspapers clearly hinted that the Government should commandeer. This led to renewed restlessness among the Dutch population, and when the Minister for Justice, who had been defeated at Kroonstad, sought election at Potchefstroom, General Smuts took the opportunity of reassuring the public. He added that he would be very sorry to see the German flag flying anywhere on the African continent after the war, and that, if internal disorders arose again in the Union, the Government would unhesitatingly mobilize the Defence Force.

This warning was undoubtedly connected with a fresh republican propaganda. There was much talk of a second rebellion, and in 1916 the movement assumed such alarming proportions that the Government had actively to intervene.

Parliament met before the year was out, and advantage was taken of the presence of prominent politicians in the South to honour our veteran statesman and critic, the Hon. J. X. Merriman, M.L.A., at a banquet in his new constituency of Stellenbosch. The guest of the evening gracefully referred to the "lustre shed upon Stellenbosch and its educational institutions by General Smuts," which, he added, was unfortunately not always appreciated.

General Smuts spoke long and eloquently. He was cordial towards Mr. Merriman, and regretted that nowadays so many politicians "secured cheap victories by pandering to passions and prejudices, which Mr. Merriman had never done. . . . The more men talked about nationality, language, and sacred rights, the less did they value those things. They should beware, lest with all that empty claptrap they forgot the things that did matter." The election campaign, he continued, had been full of

hatred. Its inwardness was that it had been watched very closely elsewhere than in Africa—in England, and in Berlin too. He read an extract from the *Vossische Zeitung*, which declared that the Nationalists would win and that "England's day of reckoning was at hand." That reading of the situation, he thought, was largely correct: we had had no ordinary election struggle, but in a sense a fight between Germanism and the British Empire. Yet, fundamentally, the verdict of the polls had decided the question whether the whites of South Africa were to live together in peace and amity. He spoke on the significance of Union, and expressed the opinion that the Government had received a firm, final, lasting mandate to found one nation. Ministers would be true to their colours and stick to their guns.

"They have called me," he proceeded, referring to many of his own race, "a Jingo and an Imperialist. But we have acted as we did because we are members of the races that are bleeding to-day for the highest ideals of humanity. If we are slothful, and sit still and fold our arms while our fate is being decided elsewhere, then we shall do an injury to South Africa." There were many inhabitants of South Africa, he said, who thought mainly of the Empire, and others to whom South Africa was the only consideration. But the Government would "do its duty by South Africa at the same time that they tried to do their duty to the Empire."

De Burger was inspired by this utterance to speak of a "Rhodes redivivus." Smuts, it argued, had all of Rhodes' annexation mania, and Smuts was the soul of the Cabinet. "What Smuts' South African Imperialism has already cost the country we all know," the article said; "brothers have shed each other's blood. Thousands of hearts are bleeding. What this policy is going to cost us in the future no one knows. If Smuts attains his ideal, we shall have an enormous country, but with a more intense colour problem, and once the Unionist immigration policy comes into operation, we doubt whether South Africa will be able to boast of a happy population."

Reading this (comparatively mild) Nationalist statement of the case, one would think that General Smuts was all for war without counting the cost. That this was far from being the case is proved by a speech he made soon after, at a Cape Town War Fellowship meeting in December 1915. South African casualties, he said, had so far been small, "but we cannot always go on like that. We must be prepared to hear that many of our boys have given their lives for the great cause. . . . We do not know whether there will be much fighting in East Africa. It is difficult to get at the true facts. So far, matters have not gone very well there. There have been heavy casualties. But we hope that, as soon as the South Africans appear on the scene in large numbers, we shall be able to avoid bloodshed by good strategy, as was done in South-West Africa."

He uttered a warning against drilling blacks and "teaching them the arts of war, as the Germans were doing." On the general subject of the war he confessed that he had his misgivings. We were not going to have an easy victory, and unless every one did his best, the principles for which we were fighting might suffer severely. "At the beginning of the war we were 'marching to Berlin.' All that spirit disappeared long ago. We have learnt the lesson that, if we want to achieve victory, we must put into the melting-pot whatever of value we possess. . . . I hope it will be 'all right,' but I do not feel sure, unless we all do our duty."

It will be seen that, with all his natural optimism, Smuts did not need to pray for deliverance from "frantic boast andf oolish word." In fact, when during the Session of Parliament importunate Unionists pressed for an increase of pay to the oversea contingent, he lifted up his voice against the matter being forced through. "We are sitting on a volcano," were his words. Few knew at the time how true they were.

During the Christmas recess he returned to Pretoria, where he gave an interview to *De Volkstem*, which was longer than any published conversation with him had ever

been. The first part of the Session, he maintained, had proved a success. When the interviewer expressed surprise at this opinion, because so little had been done and because General Smuts usually insisted on tangible results, the reply was: "That is but a superficial view. A much better spirit now prevails in Parliament, and it is important to remember that Government secured a large majority on the question of supplementing the pay of East African volunteers." He added that there was much to be said for acting as generously towards our men in Europe.

Some dissatisfaction with the release of General De Wet and some of the other rebel leaders had become manifest. The Minister defended the Government's action. It had been dictated, he contended, by a feeling of strength—not by the weak desire to yield to clamour. The decks had been cleared, and after the recess much useful, non-controversial work could be undertaken. (This was actually done.) The interviewer regretted the apathy in the South African party ranks. General Smuts attributed it to a natural reaction after the election fever. "The South African party," he predicted, "will remain in large measure responsible for South Africa's future. Political bodies will move round the South African party as a centre party. The worst dangers have been safely left behind."

This pronouncement was regarded as sounding the death-knell of the Coalition schemes that had been revived when the election figures made it clear that the Government could not command an absolute majority in the Assembly. Smuts' words caused some disappointment, but most of the Unionists admitted that they had no right to demand coalition, and that their plain duty was to support General Botha at all costs during the war period. Nationalists now knew that the reunion with the parent organization, hoped for by many of them, was not to be expected just yet.

On the 5th of January 1916 the Minister of Defence reviewed a body of volunteers for East Africa at Potchefstroom. Once more he emphasized the arduousness of the

East African campaign. The British Government, he said, had recognized this by appointing "a competent and distinguished officer, General Smith-Dorrien, to take command." He regretted that he himself could not go, but General Crewe would watch over the South Africans. They would probably "get as much fighting as was good for their health, and ere long the German flag would cease to fly in East Africa."

He was not inclined for much speech-making in these days, and when a South African party Congress was held at Pretoria, he was silent. Witwatersrand delegates brought up the question of the pay for the contingent in Europe, but he asked them to meet him in private. At a reception held in connection with this Congress, he was presented with a watch by the women of Hekpoort (one of the rebellion centres), which led him to hark back to the times when he had fought there during the Boer War, and to remark that their kindness was an exception "because usually people's memories were short." Separatism, he added, would lead South Africa to a relapse into barbarism, and the liberty so many inhabitants were claiming could only be founded on constitutionalism.

This was practically his last public utterance in the Union before his departure for East Africa. General Smith-Dorrien was lying ill at Muizenberg, though many people in South Africa insisted that he was on the way to Mombasa. The Kilimanjaro rainy season was drawing uncomfortably close, and it was important that a move should be made. The Treasury of South Africa was handed over to Mr. Burton, to the delight of the cartoonists, who drew sarcastic pictures of the state in which it was transferred. The second part of the Session was about to commence when, on the 10th of February (1916), the official announcement came of General Smuts' acceptance of the East African command.

The news occasioned not a little surprise. *De Volkstem* pointed out that such a venture could hardly attract the Minister, and that his sense of duty had moved him, because

the interests of the Union were bound up with success in German East. "Smuts is not the man to look for honour and glory . . . but it is just possible that ignoble motives will be ascribed to him for taking a step that will jeopardize his fame. . . . We protest against any such imputations, because, whatever his opponents may be able to urge against him, they are not entitled to discuss him as if his were a petty personality." The *Pretoria News* said: "The appointment is a tribute to his military genius and a compliment to South Africa."

The London Press, including the papers that had ten years before described him as a serpent in the South African Eden, was full of flattering articles, accompanied by the usual portraits, some good and some indifferent. The *Daily News*, evidently nervous as to his military talents, considered the appointment a "hazardous experiment." It rightly drew attention to the risk of withdrawing a man like Smuts from South Africa at a time of some tension, as revealed by the correspondence between Generals Botha and De Wet.[1]

The *Daily Telegraph* quoted from a description given by a South African officer of Smuts' share in the strategy that had led to the collapse of the rebellion and the victory in South-West Africa. It contained marvellous proofs of his insight, love of precaution, unflagging zeal, organizing genius, and all-round capacity.

The *Rand Daily Mail* praised Smuts' far-seeing policy.

De Burger patted itself on the back for having prognosticated "Cabinet differences." It professed to look on Smuts' departure as a withdrawal, "even if but temporary," from

[1] General De Wet had allowed himself, in contravention of the terms of his release, to be drawn into politics. He hinted plainly in public that great changes in the constitutional position of South Africa were likely to be produced in 1916. He also confided to his effervescent adherents that he had at one time looked upon himself as the "Washington of South Africa." Smuts was astounded at this disregard of the conditions imposed, and mightily amused at De Wet's own estimate of himself. After General Botha's reminder, General De Wet faithfully kept his word. In 1916 he assisted the Government in suppressing a "second rebellion" movement.

South African politics. The article was gratuitously and offensively concerned with the question of salary.

Other Nationalist organs likewise harped on the money aspect of the transaction, until their fears were calmed by the news that there would be no "scandal," and that the new Generalissimo would not draw Imperial pay, but was to receive no more than his ordinary ministerial stipend.

Ons Land at once denied the story of a Cabinet split, and regretted that General Smuts' services would not be available in Parliament. The financial libel was spread so sedulously that *De Volkstem* deemed it desirable to point out that mercenary considerations did not weigh with Smuts, who could comfortably earn much more than his ministerial emoluments if he chose to practise at the Bar.

The Nation showed a fine appreciation of high politics by pointing out that, "if we win, the result will add to South Africa's already powerful voice in the final fate of the captured German colonies."[1]

His Excellency Lord Buxton, in conveying to General Smith-Dorrien the regret, sympathy, and general disappointment felt by South Africa at his illness, stated that "the fullest confidence will be felt in General Smuts."

South Africa (London) said that Smuts had been faithful to his ideals, and had never been a reactionist. (It would be ungenerous to cast one's memory back for ten short years; in view of such eulogy.)

The object of all this comment was quietly engaged, during the time that remained to him, in packing his trunks and in watching administrative affairs at his office, up to a few hours before his train left on Friday, the 11th of February. As a rule, the great ones of the earth do not think of their "poor relations" at such times. It may be considered

[1] *The Nation* added that we *would* win "if the British forces were adequate." At the time of writing (August 1916) it is being commented upon in South Africa that (in spite of efforts made to keep up an adequate supply of Imperial troops to compensate for wastage) the moral obligation for seeing the campaign through appears to have been shifted, by implication, on to South Africa.

remarkable that, on the morning of his departure, Smuts sent a note of farewell to the author of these pages, who had not the slightest claim to such an attention. The General did not say that he was leaving the same night—that was, and remained, a military secret—but he even remembered to enclose a little volume on Eucken I had been able to lend him. And with his mind full of an "enterprise of great pith and moment," he mentioned the steps he had taken in order to be of assistance, if necessary, in a case that he knew was troubling me. Such small matters are the X-rays that lay bare a man's heart far more effectually than pages of description; this must be my justification for quoting the incident.

I went to his office, and asked him why, at a critical period, he was leaving us in order to retrieve errors in the land of the askari, the anopheles, the tsetse fly, and the jigger flea. His eyes were a steely blue as he abruptly answered: "It is all very well for you to talk. Do you know that, apart from anything else, there are 17,000 of our men there?"

I plucked up courage to tell him that his going had decided me to commit some of my ideas about him to paper. He was totally opposed to the scheme. "You are aware," he said, "that I have never courted publicity." "Perfectly true," I confessed, "but to such as you publicity comes, whether you like it or not." And so, reluctantly, he gave his consent.

That night, in the oppressive warmth of a still summer evening, half a dozen inhabitants of Irene, who had heard the secret whispered, gathered on the ill-lit station platform. Mrs. Smuts arrived first from Doornkloof; with her were the children—barefoot, bareheaded, lissom, playful, typical urchins. When the special train came panting from Pretoria, the new Lieutenant-General was still on his way to the station. Before long, he too appeared. Klein Jannie, a little more than half asleep, was in his arms. Smuts was in full uniform, and to any one that knew him it was apparent that his Imperial responsibilities were not taken

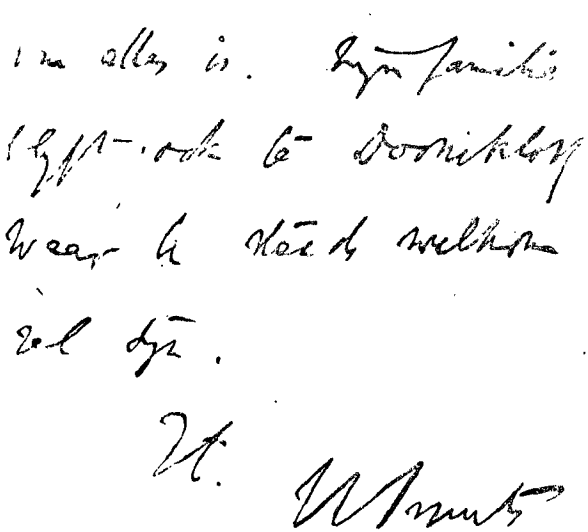
Photo by Steger, Pretoria.

GENERAL SMUTS (1915).

"Groot Jannie and Klein Jannie."

lightly. Barely a word escaped from his lips in the semi-darkness of the platform. He took the briefest of farewells of his family, but when I held out my hand, he did not take it amiss; his "sleep well" sounded queerly in these surroundings.

There was no formality, no ceremony, no "show" of any description during the very few minutes that passed. Only two Staff officers had come from the capital to take leave of him. Slightly bent forward, he took Klein Jannie right up to the train—then, with a sigh, set him down. Mrs. Smuts held up little Louie; the luggage was quickly bestowed in the van, the rightaway signal given, and on steamed the train with its big freight. It thundered down the incline; Smuts' massive figure emerged through the carriage window; a handkerchief waved; an epoch in our history seemed to have come to a sudden, startling end.



Part of Autograph Letter written by General Smuts in High Dutch at Pretoria on the day of his departure for East Africa.

(*Photo by Wilson Garner, Pretoria.*)

XXII

IRENE STATION TO MOROGORO

YES, it was a wrench when Jan Smuts stepped from that obscure station platform on to the train that took him to Durban, where he embarked and, within twenty minutes, set sail for Kilindini. So far, South Africa had known a career of comparative isolation from the rest of the world, politically, intellectually, artistically, and in many other ways. But this isolation ceased to exist on the 11th of February 1916, for the East African expedition was essentially different from the South-West campaign. The latter was on our own borders. The former took us into Equatoria.

A very few facts connected with this last phase must suffice. I am not qualified to write on military affairs, and this character sketch is growing all too long.

Of the new Commander-in-Chief, Mr. Asquith said in the House of Commons : " We can have the utmost confidence in General Smuts, in view of his varied military experience." How soon this confidence was to be justified will appear from what the *Rand Daily Mail* wrote on the 11th of March last, exactly one month after the departure from Irene : "General Smuts has not been long in making his presence felt in British East Africa. . . . He moved his forces into the Kilimanjaro area, and seized the crossing of the Lumi River, repulsing several counter-attacks with success. It was in this region that the Salaita Hill check was experienced, but the incident does not seem to have delayed the putting into force of the new commander's plans, and

as rapid movements are characteristic of his war tactics, the first definite results may be expected soon."

It will be remembered that, before General Smuts could reach the field of war, a costly reverse was suffered by the British arms at Salaita Hill. As far as can be judged, it was due to the adoption of tactics that had failed to answer in the early part of the Boer War. But all these conditions were soon changed, and a series of successes could be announced even before the torrential rains began to fall. The London Press has several times contained articles praising General Smuts' strategy in East Africa, and stating that his victories have been achieved in the face of great obstacles. His Majesty the King has, on more than one occasion, honoured General Smuts by messages of congratulation.

The measure of the new commander's good fortune and ability were, unfortunately for us in South Africa, reflected in the greater bitterness with which the Nationalist Press attacked him in his absence and continued to stir up trouble. His resignation as a Union Minister has been demanded, and the cartoonist kept busy. One of the tricks has been to place a fez on his head and a Turkish scimitar by his side, because he has exposed the anti-Mahomedan proclivities of the Germans in East Africa.

The late Lord Kitchener sent General Smuts a cable recognizing the dash of his operations, and our own Government conveyed its good wishes to the Imperial Lieutenant-General through His Excellency Lord Buxton. For some time, Smuts did not supply much information, but lately he has been more liberal in regard to news. When he cables to us direct, it is not infrequently in order to stimulate recruiting, for the country itself disables with more deadly certainty then the German bullets. There are many belts in East Africa, each with its own physical and other drawbacks, but he who wishes to read a description of these must turn to some of the many excellent articles that have been penned on the campaign. They would fill several volumes, but all are agreed on one point, viz. that General Smuts is as

careful of his men, when it is possible to look after them, as he is determined that no amount of hardships—hunger, thirst, heat, soaking, fatigue, and illness—shall delay his advance when the psychological moment has arrived. He acts with decision and premeditation. He takes all the risks that appear necessary to him for the attainment of his object, but he resists the temptation of scoring minor successes if these tend to deflect him from his main route. The supreme value of time is ever present in his mind, and so is the necessity for making concerted movements from many sides.

Thorough scouting, smashing artillery preparation, and efficient outflanking marches are some of the factors by which he keeps down the number of casualties. But needs must when the devil drives, and he has no compunction about sacrificing men when a vital position is at stake. Military men in South Africa who have heard him deal with the subject say that he considers the average British commander a trifle over-considerate at the critical point. "You are prepared to lose a certain number of men," he is reported to have said, "and you make your plans accordingly: but when a temporary check comes, you do not care to commit yourselves any further, and sometimes you do not follow up a victory fast enough." [1]

According to letters published in our newspapers, "nothing escapes his eye." One hardly needs to be told this. But it is also said that "he was right in the firing-line at the Lumi River battle." The story is not at all improbable, because

[1] I never heard him make a general statement of this nature, but it will commend itself to all who know him. Once I discussed with him a notorious military failure in the present war in Europe. He severely criticized the general officer commanding the troops of one of the Allies for not having forced a position when time was of the utmost value, as the result showed. I pointed out that the subordinate officers had reported extreme fatigue and lack of water, adding that I did not think people could be expected to fight when they were dead-tired and terribly thirsty. "Tired!" he exclaimed; "thirsty! There is no such thing when the success of a big operation trembles in the balance." And he added what he would have done, had he been in charge, to the officers who showed such human weakness.

he is unacquainted with the exact sensation of physical fear, but even an ignoramus is aware of the fact that a General Officer Commanding-in-Chief should hold his life more dearly.

In long dispatches to the War Office, General Smuts has displayed his unvarying consideration to those who work under him by mentioning the names of many generals, other officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates—English and Dutch alike. In one of them he said: "It is difficult to express my appreciation of the conduct of the troops, all of whom work with zeal and devotion; their endurance of hardships is beyond all praise."

No greater fire-eater lives in South Africa than Bishop Furse, of Pretoria. It is reported of this high ecclesiastical dignitary that, while in East Africa, he had served up to him (metaphorically, of course) a juicy German, underdone, with golden chips for breakfast every morning. Now, our fighting Bishop on his return everywhere proclaimed his admiration of Oom Jannie. More than that I cannot say. Major Wedgwood, M.P., has stated that General Smuts "is idolized by his men and shares their hardships."

Smuts is keeping the enemy on the run in the most difficult bush country. He is not sensitive about lines of communication, and his commissariat is often left far behind. Yet he finds time to read South African as well as other newspapers. At his own request, he was visited by General Botha a few weeks ago, because he has a great respect for the Premier's judgment in matters of strategy, and so asked for a consultation. He keeps his finger, by a kind of telepathic arrangement, on the pulse of Union politics, and he even asks Captain P. S. Krige, his secretary, to remember friends in South Africa sometimes. The children at Doornkloof all get their regular supply of East African picture postcards, with their father's scrawl in Afrikaans. A malarial mosquito bit Jan Smuts when the season was at its height. The insect died not long after, but Smuts is very much alive, as keen and buoyant as ever.

Recently, he took most of the German main line of rail

way, and now he is at Morogoro, or some such heathenish place. Non-combatants he treats most generously. The compromising documents that lie lurking in German cupboards he unearths with unfailing precision.

He appears to be on the eve of bringing the campaign to a triumphant issue, and we are looking forward to seeing him back here in good time for the Christmas turkey.

XXIII

MOROGORO TO ?

JAN SMUTS began at the shank-end of our continent, driving geese. He is now near the Line, driving Germans. Will that be the final stage?

The Spaniard has taught us to answer such questions with his *Quien sabe?* Soothsayers are at a discount in South Africa. The unedifying defeat of Van Rensburg's phantom hosts has been their doom. The mists swathing the peaks of the future are too dense for one who is not himself a Smuts to peer through. That he is marked out for a larger career than the one he has so far carved out for himself, with no other instrument than the sword of his intellect, seems a matter of certainty. Let us turn to the judgment of the distant but discerning critic, who is like to have gained a better perspective than is possible to us, here and now.

In the *Daily News* of the 12th of February 1916, A. G. G(ardiner) says of Smuts that he is "... the most considerable figure in Greater Britain. There is no one else who suggests anything approaching his potentiality as an influence on the future. ... There is about him a suggestion of wide, intellectual hinterlands, where he does not exactly invite you to trespass, and where you feel that far-reaching and deeply considered schemes are being fashioned. ... You have an uncomfortable feeling that he reads you like an open book, while he remains to you a hidden purpose. ... In fashioning the new instrument

of world governance the genius of General Smuts will be needed. He has been the architect of a nation. He will, we may hope, soon be one of the architects of an Empire."

"An Empire" is spoken of—not "the Empire." Whichever is meant, many of us in South Africa are a little parochial, possessed, if you like to call it so, by "the craven fear of being great." Especially does this feeling assert itself when the tax-gatherer comes round. But, apart from sordid considerations, we shall want our own house set in order as soon as the wide world shall have done with its present upheaval. We do not grudge our architect his due share in the erection of the larger edifice; but we insist that the asymmetrical lines in our own receive attention, that the rents in the wall be repaired, that the fireplace become a hearth. Only the boys who have put stones through our windows will rejoice to see the architect's back.

It is thought by many that even a great builder should have no statue until after his death. Man in general is no better than the inveterate potato-farmer: he prizes that best which is under the earth. Dead men no longer tread on the toes of others; we are allowed to sing their praises: *de mortuis*—— Delineate the living, it is said, and you dare not show the wart on the nose. What a fallacy is here implied! As if warts were allowed on the noses of the statues to the dead! Do we not owe it to the living that we should try to understand them, faults and all? And, if decency demands that we should not mar the likeness by over-emphasizing small, human failings, what of that? Will it help us much to know that Moses suffered from colds in the head, or that Socrates was henpecked? If we but conscientiously reproduce the outline that demonstrates the inner shape, avoid fulsome praise and unjust blame, what else matters? Heaven forfend that I should claim to be impartial in speaking of Jan Smuts. I have eaten of his salt. He does not belong to the type of man who leaves us so unmoved that we are entitled to say we are neither friend nor foe.

Our bias is not less real for being often beyond the realm of consciousness. Which of us would undertake to write objectively of an outstanding personality, even when he is no longer with us?

The glaring inadequacy of the series of pictures here presented can be felt by no one more keenly than by him who has thrown them on the screen. The man who wishes to know Jan Smuts has the right to demand, not a procession of disjointed images, but one great comprehensive work. Alas, the artist who will create this has not yet arisen among us. It will require a Thorvaldsen—nay, a Rodin, a modern—to draw with the tentacles of intuition the innermost out of Smuts; to visualize it for others, less gifted, by the aid of delicate sense and robust craftsmanship. Let him have the ear of a Leoncavallo, to detect among the raucous, farcical cries of the political circus its beauty and its tragedy.

Meanwhile, this patchwork may serve some useful purpose. Truth, they say, lies at the bottom of a well. Perhaps that is why so often, in seeking her, we also lie. There is safety in numbers; if none of the men whose view of Smuts has been reproduced in these pages (including Smuts himself) sees him as he really is, the one may at least be set off against the other. I have even quoted the cartoonist, most irreverent of mortals, in order to correct any tendency there may have been to hero-worship. But the hero is there: the accomplishment and the suffering will vouch for that. Smuts' enemies accuse him of sacrificing to strange gods—Janus is much spoken of these days—but no one can maintain that he has sprinkled incense on ignoble altars.

It is well that this should be so, for though much has been done, a great deal remains to be wrought. There are three ways of playing chess. You may desire brilliancy; you can demolish your opponent by taking his "timber"; you may refuse all risks and play for a steady end-game. Smuts' method is a combination of all three. He often seems to look for piquancy by incurring danger, but never

in the gambler's manner. Like the cragsman, he will skirt a precipice by the most daring "hand traverse," but he knows that he does not suffer from giddiness, and that skill, nerve, and strength are all his to speed him on his way.

He would no doubt prefer to abolish the "organized hypocrisy" known as the party system, but the personal prestige of General Botha and himself is perhaps the most powerful factor in enabling the South African Party to pass through its ordeal. His is the magic wand that destroys the vicious circle in which extreme Unionism and Nationalism would involve us. "We are the children of the Voortrekkers," is one way of clinching every argument. "This is a British possession, after all," is another. Oom Jakobus feels that he cannot budge, because Cousin Jack would close in. Cousin Jack is afraid to stand back ever so little, for Oom Jakobus might occupy the place of vantage. And so we should stagnate, if there were not some one to push distrust aside and point to a wider horizon. That, as I see it, is Smuts' value to us.

This is the land of surprises, yet it would be strange if the great change that every one foresees were not to come about after the next general election. It is impossible to say where it will leave the party with which Smuts' fortunes are bound up. Smuts has a steady hand at the wheel, and he has ever provided himself with non-skidding tyres. One of the lassoes with which it has been sought to drag him from his place has been the language question. A volume might well be devoted to this subject, and leave it unexhausted. He has been accused of indifference, or worse, towards his own tongue by those whose policy is summed up in the words "*De taal is gans het volk*" (It is the language that makes the people). That the kernel of truth contained in this saying is not the whole truth cannot be shown more clearly than by the instance of the South African Malays—it being admitted that they afford an extreme argument, and that the whites occupy a place apart. The Cape Malay is of Mongol origin, as his features

prove. He came to us via the Dutch East Indies. His religion is that of the Arabs, whose language he has preserved in his Church. At home he speaks Dutch. In politics he is an uncompromising supporter of English-speaking South Africa. And he is, on the whole, as South African as it is possible to be. Cannot we learn a lesson from this striking case? Let it be understood that the constitutional equality of the two languages leaves much, so far, to be desired in actual practice. It is nearly always the Dutch language that suffers.

Smuts' record proves his attachment to his mother-tongue; his fault has been that he has not proclaimed his love from the housetops. In South Africa, perhaps elsewhere, reputations have been built up on the loudness of protestations. To understand all is to forgive all; he who would unreservedly blame Smuts' people for misunderstanding him cannot know that the multitude insists on tangible ikons being periodically held up to worship. Spinoza, the "god-intoxicated philosopher," was an atheist to his contemporaries. Smuts can hardly complain if he is looked upon as a cosmopolitan. The foregoing pages from his career supply an answer to the charge. Let us cite one incident which shows the true man. A promising young graduate, sprung from a Dutch family with a Dutch name, had come back from oversea countries where he had gathered knowledge. Smuts thought that he would make an excellent servant of the State, particularly in a domain where he would come into contact with the Boer. A conversation took place. When the young man had left, the Minister's entourage raised its eyebrows in inquiry. No inquiry was, really, needed; Smuts' florid face told its own tale. "The fellow hasn't learnt his own language; he is useless to us," were his words; and that ended the matter.

In a sense, of course, Smuts is a cosmopolitan. So was Paul. Smuts proves all things, holding fast that which is good in his eyes. Many of his own race, with utter lack of discrimination, lovingly imitate the imported without

realizing it, but in their waking moments shriekingly protest against desecration of their own. Smuts is always conscious of his actions and of his outlook on life; he emulates rivals, and does not shriek. He will not be coerced into cataleptic trances of admiration. He sees no danger in his own side yielding greatly, when to yield is indispensable. He knows that South Africa's birth-rate figures bear chiefly the traces of Dutch handwriting.

The herd becomes occasionally alarmed when it sees bull-necked leaders straying from what it imagines to be the correct path. Instinct and experience both must tell the leader how far he can indulge his own bent, and when the leanings of the flock must be obeyed.

That is the problem of adaptation, of life itself. The trouble in South Africa lies in the existence of two herds; the Highland cattle are prone to bellow when they see the heads of their clan pointing in the direction of the Shorthorns. It is because Smuts knows that every herd is not only held together by cohesive forces, but develops the desire to gore when it waxes fat, that he is constantly endeavouring to make the two join in roaming the one pasture.

The Dutch of South Africa count many reasonable men among their numbers who, without decrying Smuts and his aims, are fearful lest their offspring should be thrown on a Procrustean bed, with measurements determined by oversea influences. Before there can be peace among us, he and his will have to convince these men that the cultural prospects of the Dutch are not jeopardized by assimilation. One of his difficulties centres in the fact that the tumultuous wails of fanatics threaten to drown the voice of explanation. He himself is so little a thrall to prejudice that sometimes he does not find it feasible to enter the minds of less favoured individuals. It has been said of him that his rigid insistence on broad-mindedness borders on the narrow-minded. Yet we have seen that this optimist of the optimists frequently raises his voice in warning when he sees the breakers of unrest ahead; the pilot must watch high on

the bridge, though the captain have leisure to rest in his cabin.

Rest is not for such as he. In *The Capture of De Wet*, Mr. P. J. Sampson says of him: "This man, working twelve hours a day at the South African War Office, is Kitchener, Asquith and Lloyd George in one." Done into plain English, this means that the Minister who can boast such extraordinary powers of mind and body is burning the candle at both ends—and in the middle, too. Time after time his friends have asked him to take a respite. Usually, he refuses to admit the need of one. After the Rebellion he acknowledged that a holiday would do him good. Then came the election of 1915, and hard upon its heels the campaign in the East. When that is over he must become a tourist, or there will be grave danger of a breakdown. He is accustomed to read a novel before going to sleep, but that source of recuperation will not always serve.

In spite of the force already spent, the first impression he makes is one of strength, and strength in reserve. His dominant trait has always been love of South Africa, of his country as a whole. His devotion has kept him unswervingly to his duty, or perhaps one should say that the two are one, forming, with his tremendous will-power, an all-sufficing trinity. Implicit in his actions—who could read them otherwise?—are Antonio's words to Bassanio :—

> And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
> In making question of my uttermost,
> Than if you had made waste of all I have.

Yet, let us be chary of comparisons, for in the prodigality of his effort he resembles the irresistible spendthrift Bassanio more than the mealy-mouthed Antonio.

There is an element of terror in his strength. In 1910, Mr. Hopley felt that. Smuts comes down like an avalanche, and the obstacles in his path are swept away. "*Vivos voco; fulgura frango*" he may proudly exclaim. His *mortuos plango* does not, as a rule, last long. He

is protean and pragmatic, but do not ask me whether he loves work for its own sake. One may be tempted to think that he does not value the quarry, but relishes only the hunting. And then fresh facts will obtrude themselves, and the Berserker rage with which he pushes forward to his goal will obliterate all else from sight.

Casuistry, elusive tactics, disingenuousness have been alleged against him. Remember the cases in which he confounded his detractors, before you pronounce judgment. But a lawyer he is, and also a politician. Has not the Prince of Denmark said that such a one "would circumvent God"? Men dub him "Slim Jannie," and pay tribute to his diplomacy. Verily, a saint would be out of place among us. He has been called the embodiment of opportunism; those who are less superficial pretend to have found a Hedonist in him. Why trouble to contradict them? South Africa has weathered many gales, and when the good ship is storm-tossed by a contrary wind, the man at the helm must tack. Inconsistency has been urged. The main facts have been given; the reader will judge for himself—I will not say herself, because consistency is not a cardinal virtue to the feminine mind. But, let us consider for a moment: How did Gladstone end, and how begin? What was Beaconsfield's consistency? Bismarck used all parties in turn. Jan Hofmeyr supported many different Cabinets in his day. Kruger took office during the British interregnum, after the first annexation. Sauer and Merriman have been virulent anti-Bondsmen. Smuts could give all of them a lesson in consistency.

Remember this, too: His task has been as that of no other South African statesman before him. The jig-saw puzzle of our population and our wide-flung borders has not been before any one that preceded him. He has had to think out policies—blissful task! He has been obliged to apply them—terrible undertaking! Ours is a primitive community, but partly evolved; thus, a man cannot set up as a prophet and refuse to be a priest. He must be a counsellor and a captain. While he feels himself uplifted

by the sublime idea, the soot and the grime of party politics stain his yellow sleeve. The people themselves, in a young country, find it easier to follow their leaders than to choose between principles.

The statesman who can reconcile and combine contending claims is the leader in South Africa. Smuts has shown remarkable constructive capacity, but as an Opposition speaker he would make our hearts rejoice. He has the analytical faculty most strongly developed : he would shine among the Ruperts of debate. It is his care, however, to ensure the safety of his own camp, let his sally be as impetuous as it may. His synthetic work has incurred suspicion—never derision. "Autocracy" is the plaint ; plutocratic connections have been discovered by eyes that wanted to discover them. But his principal opponents to-day have their own capitalists to support them. If the common people will march in the legions that are led by Smuts, our democratic institutions will ensure the preponderance of their voice as against any scheme that he might conceivably nurture. Tyrants do not make themselves ; they are made by their environment. We shall have the Smuts that we deserve.

Look, the destructive critics say : there have been four insurrections since the date of Union. I shall believe in their sincerity as soon as they pay their doctor for the days of their health instead of for the number of his visits. That would seem a logical procedure, if medicine were a positive science.

Let us ponder the difficulties of his position. Much may be asked of the brain. What of the arms and legs ? Our civil service consists, roughly, of 70 per cent. Unionists and 20 per cent. Nationalists. They perform their allotted tasks according to their respective lights. Is the remaining one-tenth sufficient to carry out behests with the faith which alone "maketh whole" ?

None of this is meant to defeat the proposition that every man is tied, hand and foot, by the limitations imposed on him by his own qualities. We know that Smuts, a fatalist, bows to "the logic of the stricken field." He himself has

told us so. But we have also heard from his own lips that he does not care "what A says or what B says." He was present in Parliament when the late Mr. Sauer uttered his famous indictment of the "watertight compartments" in our Government. Smuts did not contradict. Impermeability is a splendid property in a shower, but it does not make for cordiality of co-operation.

He strives to see the panorama of life as one great, continuous canvas; but he is fallible, and it has occurred that he has deserved the reproach levelled by him in his student days at literature, viz. that it confused the temporal with the permanent. He never forgets that he is forging a chain, but the very earnestness and concentration of his nature will occasionally make him ignore the fact that the link upon which he is engaged is merely a link.

Who can wonder that this quivering modernist, imbued as he is with the historical sense, must now and then learn that he is "out of touch" with the stolid farmers who are his pillars and his props? A new life is stirring in our body politic. We have two capitals; there are four extensive provinces to be travelled, after pious resolutions have been registered at Cape Town and ordinances (not always pious) have been gazetted. Thus a man's time for keeping in touch is limited. The Young Afrikanders, who used to look up to Smuts as one of their rising stars, will have it that "*ons nasie is mondig*" (our people are of age). Smuts answers them by taking that from other nations which can go towards the upbuilding of a powerful State. But, behold, in his own person he is ever making true the proud boast of the Boer: "*Ons mense kan alles*" (our people can do anything). A nomadic, patriarchal existence has made the Afrikander rest on his own strength, whether as a blacksmith, a deacon, a veterinary surgeon, a soldier, a tinker, or a tailor. Until the year of grace 1916 the only calling not exercised by the Boer was that of a sailor. Here you see Smuts stepping into the breach of national versatility. He occupies Dar-es-Salaam and other harbours by the co-operation of naval forces. His is the genius that is not satisfied with rough-hewing; he rounds off.

We, who are privileged to see him at close quarters, can testify that he has not cut himself adrift from the national current of his own people. Englishmen around him have not failed to note that he is forever concerned with *ons mense*. He will maintain some appointments, undesirable perhaps on general grounds, because particular considerations connected with either race make it impolitic to terminate them. During the 1915 election struggle, when feeling ran its highest, I heard him turn down a suggestion that he should exploit a certain Rebellion episode. "Let it be," he said; "it does not redound to the credit of our people."

He is intolerant only of petty issues; his impatience is notorious, and he is a disciplinarian. That is why he so frequently collides with the trek-ox-like impassiveness of the average South African workaday. There is something lack-lustre, lax, homespun about us, but only on the surface, and until we are roused. The Great Trek and the working of our deep-level gold mines are my warranty for this statement. A Piet Retief, a Rhodes, a Smuts comes at times to provide the stimulus, the "ginger." While it is being administered, we resent the operation. We settle down when we recognize that there is no meretricious quality in Smuts; he allows no tinsel, nothing flabby, slack, or gaudy. His handshake tells you all. He is sparing with this form of greeting—which in South Africa is overdone—but his grip is a revelation.

Honoured, feared, held in the deepest affection by those who know him best, masterful, resolute, not a little puzzling—this man is despised by none. Even the factions who see in him the author of their misfortunes have a sneaking regard for him; his undeniable virility secures him that. Of all our statesmen he is the one who concerns himself most with detail. There are chinks in his armour, of course, and, though rarely, he will astonish his collaborators by neglecting important facts. I fancy he is inclined to underrate the value of gossip as a psychological fingerpost.

Finish and distinction ordinarily characterize his work.

There have been exceptions: in the greatest masters of art we sometimes notice coarse crudity, due perchance to superabundant physical health. The obligations of Smuts' position may force him to be a refrigerator to the atmosphere around him; then you will find him stiff, formal, curt. When he can throw off official reserve, and when the strain of his duties has not overfatigued him, he surprises you by his lovable quips and pranks. His absence always makes itself felt, even though his presence does not.

His is a clear-cut personality, in spite of the antinomy that seems to exist between the different parts. His great master, Kant, demolished time and space, but the good people of Koenigsberg set their watches by the little professor's clock-like appearances in their streets. So you will discover in Smuts a contempt for amateurs and theorists, a strong predilection for empiricism, coupled with a genuine belief in pure science. He, too, has evolved his Critique of Pure Reason and his Critique of Practical Reason. He is surely the most practical idealist, the most martial metaphysician, that ever lived. He indulges in daydreams, but rises in the dead of night to turn them into facts. The subtle lawyer in him has not made a legalist. Chockfull of sentiment, he knows no sentimentality. In Parliament he once spoke of conscientious objectors as "the salt of the earth." Outside, he peppers them. He is as old as the hills, and as young, as fresh. While he crisply makes history, he asks to be remembered by his interest in school-teaching! Soon after the grant of self-government to the Transvaal, when so much broad policy had to be considered, he spent a great deal of his scant leisure in working out the manifold, intricate details of a townships Bill—on the surface a measure such as lawyers love to haggle over; in reality a piece of work ensuring freehold tenure to thousands of small men. By such things he will not be remembered, for when the maxims are silent, our manual workers have eyes for the class-war only.

Contrasts of this sort may be accepted as natural in a

world that looks all awry. For who would have anticipated a struggle such as we are passing through from a generation that knew, and paid, its bioscope clowns ten times better than its Cabinet Ministers? With cubism in art, broad farce and heavy melodrama on the stage, futurism in music, pornography in literature, and charlatanism in the churches, where was the prospect of so much endurance? There is a touch of incongruity, too, about the very corner of Africa that has produced Smuts. In summer it looks parched, dusty, uninviting. In early winter, the rains come; the lush young grass springs up in a night; the land is rejuvenated and refreshed, and by the time the first snow covers the mountain-tops, the plain is emerald; pellucid pools sing pæans with thousands of red flowers for their tiny mouths.

To the casual observer Smuts will remain an enigma, and no one can claim that he understands him thoroughly. Do such men taste happiness, spiritually isolated as they are in an age of inspissated insipidity—an age of vodka and veronal, of night restaurants and eugenics? Maybe they find their consolations on the heights. In his case, at any rate, thought is not a malady, but ever a spur to action, though a brake on the chariot-wheels of sentiment. The irony of circumstance has willed it so that one whose endeavour has ever been for peace should have become to many a harbinger of war. He might have graced an ambassador's palace or a chair of intellectual leadership. We, with our internecine squabbles, have made a glorified policeman of him! When shall we be visited by another such, with the glow of imagination, enthusiasm for driving force, love of reality, hatred of attitudinizing? Many a platform speaker would have said, as Smuts himself said at Cape Town in 1915, that we had to throw all we had of value into the melting-pot. But how many would have suited the action to the word?

It may sound trite to call a man a Spartan. Yet by what other name could one best describe Smuts? I discussed with him once the probable effects of the World

War ; the only opinion to which he would commit himself was that it had come in the nick of time to save some European countries from luxury, over-indulgence, effeteness of civilization. His affinity with Draco has not killed the literary sense in him. He drinks in the beauty of a landscape and that of the differential calculus with the same avidity ; the clash of arms inspires him no less than the smile of a child. And he can express them all, if not with great elegance, at least forcefully, in words full of vividness and fire. This is a dangerous gift in a politician, but his elocutionary zeal seldom outruns his discretion. When he gives way to the temptation of hyperbole, he again shows himself a child of his race, for a Gascon looseness of phrase dwells amongst us. It is a commonplace in South Africa that a man may be *dood, maar nie morsdood nie* ("dead," but not stone-dead) !

The shimmer of political mirage has more than once hurled his legs into the air and his head downwards, but the *fata Morgana* has always vanished. Often, when the public have been befogged, lambent flashes of his intellect have cleared up the dark places. When they have failed to do so, he cannot have had the desire, for he possesses in a remarkable degree the power to sum up a situation ; it must be presumed that much introspection precedes his commune with the mind of the masses.

The question is sometimes asked—what has been his greatest period ? In law he shone most brilliantly during the years that came after the Boer War, when he had still a private practice. As a politician he may be said to have done his best work hitherto as a Minister of the Transvaal, but we do not know what lies ahead. Few will doubt that he would have been an eminent divine, a great chemist, a famous surgeon, a gargantuan tiller of the soil, had he not entered public life. His adaptability as a warrior is exemplified by what is happening at this very moment. In the Boer War he did most of his work as the commander of a flying column, consisting of mounted infantry and very little else. To-day the conditions of his own force are

far different, and so are those of his enemy. Wireless telegraphy and flying machines, motor corps and tented hospitals, heavy guns and cold steel have to be reckoned with in his plans.

Is it wonderful that a million and a quarter whites are obsessed by a man of his calibre, that his many facets dazzle us with their paradoxical light? After all, it is only fair, because we obsess him too; the thought of us, from whatever race we have sprung, is always with him. Sometimes we chafe under mental tutelage, we groan aloud in the spirit. It is then that Emerson comes to us with drops of comfort: "We need not fear excessive influence. A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great. Stick at no humiliation. Grudge no office thou canst render. Be the limb of their body, the breath of their mouth. Compromise thy egotism. Who cares for that, so thou gain aught wider and nobler? Never mind the taunt of Boswellism; the devotion may easily be greater than the wretched pride which is guarding its own skirts."

It has been suggested that Smuts and his associates are the spoilt darlings of political fortune, that he in particular would have governed better if he had been in Opposition longer; that a brief stay in the desert would do him no harm. But his asceticism does not run to hair-shirts, and though our wild honey is famous, our very practical Government has exterminated nearly all the locusts. Furthermore, we have no guarantee that the processes of metabolism will convert such comestibles into useful bone and sinew in his system; the experiment will, who knows? be made one day. He does not need monastic exercises to attain merit of soul, because his woof is Pauline—justification by faith—shot with the Petrine warp of a firm belief in the efficacy of good works.

To his many-sided nature fine justice has been done by Mr. Roderick Jones's eloquent articles in the *Observer* and the *Nineteenth Century*. I have no space to quote them, but when we deal with Smuts the man, we may take it from Mr. Jones—who has known him for two decades—

that he is "a friend and companion beyond compare." Such, indeed, he must be to every circle that, like himself, lives a concrete life with a vision for the abstract. His face, when in repose, expresses the wistful dissatisfaction pertaining to every seeker of the ideal. His lofty, domed forehead would indicate exceptional brain-power, even without the markedly bulging parts over the eyebrow, in which the phrenologist finds mathematical genius. The nose is arched, but not exactly aquiline; broad at the nostrils, yet not excessively so, when compared with the prominent cheekbones. The mouth is large, the chin firm. They are hidden by moustache and pointed beard, the latter saved from an appearance of partial greyness by its original fair colour. A clear skin, seamed by the ravages of excessive work and anxiety, is surely being tanned by the East African sun. The neck and torso correspond in their phenomenal dimensions, free from all stoutness. The voice is well-modulated, and agrees with his height, which exceeds the medium.

You might know all this, and yet have no idea of what Smuts looks like, for it is his eyes that rivet attention. Light blue in colour, they will sometimes assume a grey tint, or appear like the azure of the ocean. Their normal expression is haunting, penetrative. They preach sermons of severity, command, appeal, reproach; flash forth bitter indignation; caress, flagellate, magnetize an assembly. They can chant a threnody, or dance wild cancans when the quizzical mood of the *gamin* seizes him, and his laughter rings out child-like. During a conversation he may disconcert you, if you do not know him, for he has a trick of suddenly jumping up, full of electrical energy and infectious joy. The next time you visit him, he will keep his eyes fixed on the ceiling or bend over his papers as a signal that he is not in the mood for talk. He has more than a spice of the devil, politely called temperament. Ostentation is as impossible to him as cringing would be. At most times his attitude is perhaps too detached to commend him to the bantering familiarity of the masses. Why, in

the face of this, he should be to us "Oom Jannie," or simply "Jannie," while no one ever speaks of General Botha as "Oom Louis" (still less as "Louis"), I cannot say. That is one of the minor mysteries of mankind.

It is much easier to explain why Smuts is an exception to the rule that no man is a hero to his valet: he has none, either literally or figuratively. He has attained the only true independence, which consists in a man doing his own work. He has not servants so much as fellow-workers. He is able to bear a microscopic examination of his daily routine. Familiarity with his methods does not breed contempt, but rather increased respect, intensified good-will. In spite of the new conditions, he is still accessible to most. One is inclined on some days to believe that our distances are a fiction, fostered by cartographers and booking-clerks, for on Smuts' stoep you will find itinerant orange-vendors from Rustenburg, intoning the litany of high politics, and sheep-farmers from the Karroo giving the responses.

Jan Christiaan Smuts stands sharply silhouetted against our ofttimes inky sky. As every new arrival by the main route to South Africa catches sight of Table Mountain first so he who mentally approaches our country spies Smuts on the horizon. Like Table Mountain, he is joined by a high saddle to his twin peak, the faithful sharer of his public burden. His broad front recalls the square, buttressed faces of that venerable pile which has become typical of South Africa. The striking acquirements with which he complements the endowment of nature resemble the slowly deposited layers of Table Mountain sandstone, resting so proudly on their crystalline, unstratified base of granite. While the town basks in fair weather, the mountain feels stormclouds passing over its head. So does Smuts stand exposed to the tempest, while we shelter in the vale. The winter rain, drawn and held by the huge, grey mass, sculptures deep ravines into its sides, full of terrifying waterfalls, but offering shady nooks, beautiful aspects, gorgeous orchids. Smuts would be superhuman if indentations had not been cut into the substance of his self by

the blizzards that have raged on his crown. And there are other points of identity. One must stand at a distance from Table Mountain before one can see on its flat top the eminence that is its highest point. We are too close to our mountain to appreciate its altitude.

None can tell what fate may have in store for South Africa and for Jan Smuts. But of this one fact I am very sure—come fine, come wet, the generation that has known him face to face will give him this epitaph when the inevitable day arrives :—

> He was a man, take him for all in all,
> I shall not look upon his like again.

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